

DICKENS

Markedichene

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LONDON, W.C. 1.



What do you almost instinctively think at the mere mention of Dickens's name?

Is it of the man's personality, is it of his spectacular career, is it of his books, is it of some outstanding characteristic of his art or of the aspect from which he projects his views of life?

In other words, does the name "Dickens" conjure up before you the lonely boy in London's millions rising to the pinnacle of fame; or the books themselves in their opulent entirety; or the supreme drollery, the grotesquerie, the elvish vivacity of his creations—the men and women and slums and sunsets and door-knockers? Or do you visualise that fierce anger of his against all oppression, that swell of the heart towards all human kindness, that Titanic benevolence which laughs through tears and warms misery to the happiness of a virile life?

Perhaps it is this last divine power that is the secret of his fame because it pervades all other characteristics and influences every phase of his genius. Should this be so, an appeal for help to anyone with Dickens in his thoughts must perforce meet with a response. To seek help for suffering humanity from a true "Dickensian" must surely be as certain in effect as the sowing of seed in good ground.

So the blind confidently ask for your assistance. You must know that they sorely need it, for who can better understand all that loss of sight means than a lover of Dickens—the man with eyes which could see men and women and things in such truth of detail, with such infinite comprehension!

The National Institute for the Blind is the largest institution of its kind in the world. One branch of its work is the publication of embossed books, and the majority of Dickens's works—as loved by the blind as by you all—are in Braille. This fellow—feeling alone should induce you to become an annual subscriber to the Institute's funds and to take an active interest in its work.

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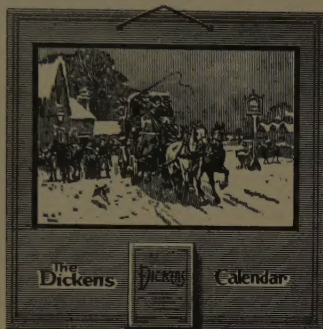
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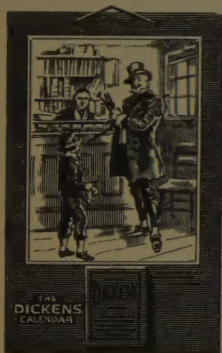
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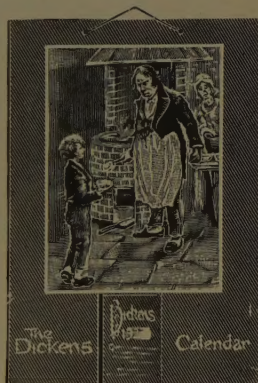
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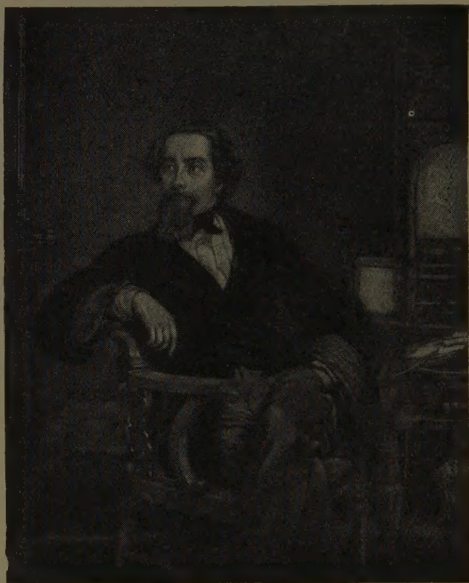
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DICKENS

The Story of the Life of The World's Favourite Author

BY

WALTER DEXTER

Author of "The England of Dickens," etc.

Editor of "The Dickensian"

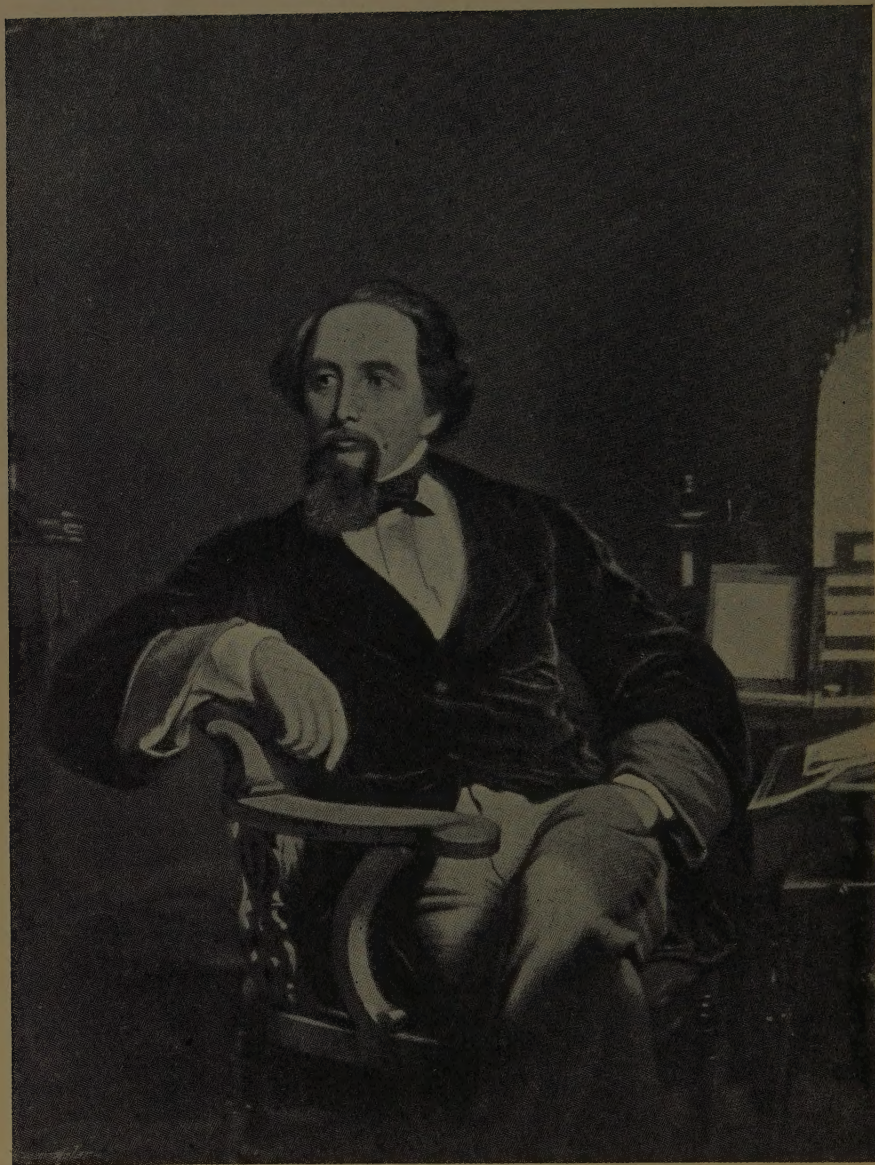
PUBLISHED BY

THE DICKENS FELLOWSHIP

THE DICKENS HOUSE,

48 DOUGHTY STREET, LONDON, W.C.1

—
1927



Charles Dickens in 1859

From a painting by W. P. Frith, R.A.

Exhibited at the Royal Academy 1860
Now in the Forster Collection at South Kensington



The Story of the Life of Dickens

I.

Boyhood!



TO the majority of readers Charles Dickens is known simply as a story-teller and creator of such characters as Little Nell, Pickwick, Micawber and Tiny Tim. But Dickens holds his place to-day, fifty-seven years after his death, not on account of his stories alone, but

The
Birthplace
of
Charles
Dickens



Commercial
Road,
Portsmouth,
7 February,
1812

because he had a deeper message, which he endeavoured to inculcate through his writings.

"To leave one's hand lastingly upon time," he wrote, "with one tender touch for the mass of toiling people that nothing can obliterate, would be to lift oneself above the dust of all the doges in their graves and stand upon a giant's staircase that Samson could not overthrow."

Dickens did not merely create humbugs for the world to laugh at; nor did he invent impostors to excite its derision: he had a far deeper mission than that. When he commenced to write close on ninety years ago, he found the poor neglected, forgotten and over-ridden; and he set out by means of his *Bumble* and the rest, to awaken the conscience of the country to the pressing needs of reform. Alike in his novels and in his anonymous contributions to the press, he persistently pursued the same course.

This book is a simple outline of Dickens's life, and a closer study of his writings will leave the reader to judge of his title of reformer, and of his right to be regarded as a great teacher and a great preacher.

It was on the seventh of February, 1812, that Dickens first saw the light of day, and Commercial Road, the property of the Corporation, who have housed in it an interesting Dickens Museum.

He was one of eight where Wealth was an Plenty rarely sat at

In such a household young Charles had the pathos of childhood; than he how real and sorrows; none entered into its ways.

Again and again he to the scenes and hood, and places him-child in the position

if this short story of his life deals somewhat more fully with his childhood than it does with his later and successful life, it is because his childhood forms the true index to his character and his teaching. Emerson said that Dickens was writing London tracts, and this is a truism that we must ever keep before us; tracts served up to the public, often as the lightest of fiction; and his early days were the days when the seeds of these tracts were sown.

Although Portsmouth was his birthplace, it did not claim him for long; for at two years of age he was brought up to London, and then shortly afterwards his father was moved to the Dockyard at Chatham, and the family came to live at Chatham at a house in Ordnance Terrace, since marked with a tablet.

And now we come to the great fascination which this part of the country had for him, and which was with him until his death. No town, save perhaps London itself, was more often written about by Dickens than Rochester, the town adjacent to Chatham, and there was no place he loved more than the quaint house at Gads Hill, just out of Rochester, on the London Road. This house attracted his attention



11 Ordnance Terrace,
Chatham

his birthplace in the Portsmouth, is now Corporation, who have interesting Dickens

children in a family unfamiliar visitor, and the board.

there is no doubt that keenest feelings of the few understood better overwhelming were its more sympathetically

reverts in his books incidents of his child-self or some imaginary he once occupied; and



Rochester Castle



Gads Hill Place, near Rochester

Dickens's Home, 1858-1870

Photos by Walter Dexter



before he was five years of age. At the age of forty-four he purchased it; and he died there on June 9th, 1870. His daughter Mamie thus speaks of her father's love for Gads Hill Place:

"As a little fellow he had a wonderful liking and admiration for the house, and it was, to him, like no other house he had ever seen. He would walk up and down before it with his father, gazing at it with delight, and the latter would tell him that perhaps, if he worked hard, was industrious, and grew up to be a good man, he might some day come to live in that very house. His love for this place went through his whole life, and was with him until his death."



Old Cheeseman

The books of his childhood were the "Vicar of Wakefield," "Robinson Crusoe," "The Arabian

Tom Pinch

Nights," "Don Quixote," "Roderick Random" and "Peregrine Pickle." He read those books so carefully that at times he imagined himself to be the heroes of them. "I have been Tom Jones for a week together," he says. "I have sustained my own idea of Roderick Random for a month at a stretch, I verily believe." He continues to tell how, while the boys were playing in the churchyard, he would be sitting "on the bed reading as if for life. Every barn in the neighbourhood, every foot of the churchyard, had some association of its own, and, in my mind, was connected with these books, and stood for some locality made famous in them. I have seen Tom Pipes go climbing up the church steeple. I have watched Strap, with the knapsack on his back, stopping to rest himself on the wicket gate; and I know that Commodore Trunnion had held that club with Mr. Pickle in the parlour of the little village ale-house."

Being such a reader, such a realist, and such a romancer, is it at all wonderful that at a very early age we should find young Charles writing stories for the benefit of his youthful companions?

Thus, as a boy, Dickens used to invest the dull things of life with a real and living interest, and connect the buildings about him with the characters and doings in the books he used to read. When he came to



High Street, Rochester



Jasper's Gate House
Rochester



Bull Hotel, Rochester

write books later on, he again invested these very buildings with a life that was so real that thousands of people visit Rochester and the surrounding country, not to see its fine Cathedral, consecrated by Saint Augustine, and a striking example of Norman work, not to see its historic Castle, the keep here shown being one of the finest specimens of Norman military architecture in England, not to see any of these real antiquities of the city, but to see the places introduced by Dickens into his works: to see Eastgate House, the Ladies' Seminary of *Edwin Drood*, where Rosa Bud went to school, to see the house of the eccentric Miss Havisham and the objectionable Uncle Pumblechook, both of *Great Expectations*, to see the Town Hall, where Pip was "bound prentice" to his brother: to see the house of the "Seven Poor Travellers," and many other places which have an association with Dickens and his works.

No inn in the kingdom enjoys such a curious literary popularity as the Bull at Rochester. Many people will point out an inn or a house where some great person has resided, but here we have an inn in which only a fictitious character stayed on one or two occasions, and that fact has made it world-famous. So great a personage as Queen Victoria stopped one night at the Bull, but the Bull is not famed for that, and, although the room in which she actually did sleep is shown to the visitors, those who pass that way ask to see the room occupied by Mr. Pickwick, and those in which Mr. Winkle and Mr. Tupman slept, and, strange to say, they are shown to them! If you should wander that way you will find that Mr. Pickwick slept in No. 11, Mr. Winkle in No. 19, and Mr. Tupman in No. 13, this being the room occupied by Queen Victoria some time later.

Here, then, at Chatham and Rochester, which, although really two towns, are in fact one, for as Dickens says in one of his Christmas stories, "If anybody knows to a nicety where Rochester begins and Chatham ends it is more than I do"—here, then, at the early age of from four to nine years he began "to peep about with interest and wonder," storing up the knowledge he thus obtained for future use. Here he exercised his keen powers of observation, keener then than at any other period of his life, with the result that we find these glimpses of his childhood permeating his books, from his earliest sketches.



Corn Exchange,
Rochester





Paul Dombey

through the immortal *Pickwick* to his very last book, *Edwin Drood*, the book he left unfinished one bright June day, when his pen was laid aside for ever.

In one of his "uncommercial" travels we find him rambling about the scenes among which his earliest days were spent.

"Of course the town had shrunk fearfully since I was a child there. I had entertained the impression that the High Street was at least as wide as Regent Street, London, or the Italian Boulevard at Paris. I found it little better than a lane. There was a public clock in it, which I had supposed to be the finest clock in the world; whereas it now turned out to be as inexpressive, moon-faced, and weak a clock as ever I saw. It belonged to a Town Hall. . . . The edifice had appeared to me in those days so glorious a structure that I had set it up in my mind as the model on which the Genie of the Lamp built the palace of Aladdin. A mean little brick heap, with a few yawning persons in leather gaiters, and in the last extremity for something to do, lounging at the door with their hands in their pockets, and calling themselves a Corn Exchange!"

So were many of his boyish dreams shattered, but we read in conclusion: "Ah, who was I that I should quarrel with the town for being changed to me when I had come back so changed to it?"

Dickens's earliest teaching, like that of David Copperfield's, was received at his mother's knee.

"I faintly remember her teaching me the alphabet; and when I look upon the fat black letters in the primer, the puzzling novelty of their shapes and the easy good nature of O and S always seem to present themselves before me as they used to do."

Dickens's biographer writes that Dickens himself told him of this five years before the words were put into the mouth of David Copperfield.

Later, together with his sister Fanny, he went to school in Rome Lane, close by his home, and all his school-fellows and playmates were one by one put into the sketches which he wrote in later years under the pen name of "Boz."

Here he used to amuse his friends with recitations at Christmas-time: he even wrote a play and acted in it himself. When Charles was nine the family moved into a smaller house in Chatham, next to a chapel,



and William Giles, son became his school-affection sprang up which extended into

It was in December, then not 11 years of and came to London, coach. "Through all since passed," he lost the smell of the I was packed—like carriage paid, to the Street, Cheapside, no other inside presumed my sandwiches ness, and it rained I thought life sloppier to find it."



16 Bayham Street,
Camden Town

of the minister there, master, and a strong between the two, later years.

1822, that Dickens—age—left Chatham travelling in a stage the years that have writes, "have I ever damp straw in which game—and forwarded, Cross Keys, Wood London? There was senger, and I con—in solitude and dreari—hard all the way, and than I had expected

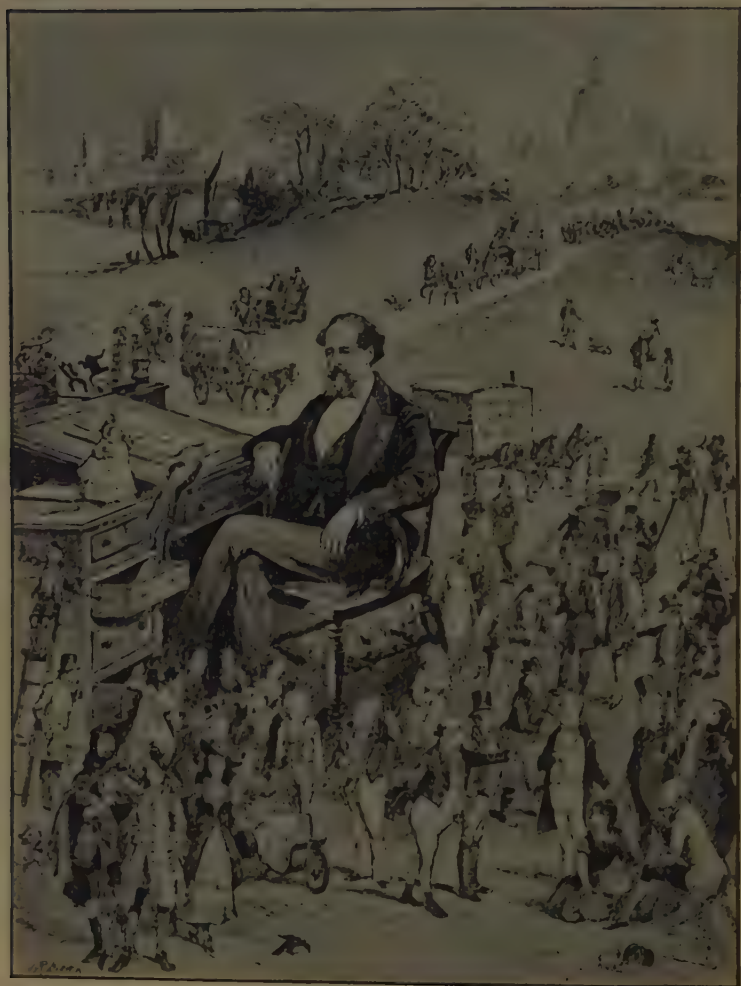
His acquaintance with the metropolis was somewhat one-sided. His father was in financial difficulties and could only afford to rent one of the small six-roomed houses then being built in Camden Town, on the outskirts of London. This was No. 16 Bayham Street, later known as No. 141, and demolished a few years ago.

"That he took from the very beginning of this Bayham Street life," writes Forster, "his first impression of that struggling poverty which is nowhere more vividly shown than in the commoner streets of the ordinary London suburb and which enriched his earliest writings with a freshness of original humour, there cannot be a doubt."

The straightened circumstances of his father, which he had just begun to understand, and the loss of his Chatham playmates, and of his much respected schoolmaster, made him regard the outlook as even blacker than it really was. "As I thought in the little back garret in Bayham Street of all I had lost in losing Chatham," he wrote, "what would I have given, if I had had anything to give, to have been sent back to any other school, to have been taught something, anywhere" . . .

"I knew my father to be as kind-hearted and generous a man as ever lived . . . but . . . in the straitness of his means, he appeared to have utterly lost at this time the idea of educating me at all, and to have utterly put from him the notion that I had any claim upon him, in that regard, whatever. So I degenerated into cleaning his boots of a morning, and my own; and making myself useful in the work of the little house; and looking after my younger brothers and sisters (we were six in all), and going on such poor errands as arose out of our poor way of living."

But here he was receiving that natural education of life which he turned to such good account in later years: here his great love for London was first awakened. From the end of the street he could see the dome of St. Paul's looming through the clouds.



A Dickens Reverie

By J. R. Brown

To be taken out for a walk into Covent Garden or the Strand was to him indeed a joy, and if he could only induce somebody to take him to Seven Dials, he was supremely happy.

The tenancy of 141 Bayham Street was not a long one, for towards the end of the year 1823 they removed to No. 4 Gower Street North, now demolished for Messrs. Maple's premises.

Here Mrs. Dickens to be affixed to "Mrs. Dickens's Establishment" nobody ever came to recollect that any to come, or that the made for anybody."

This finds a parallel Micawber's Boarding Young Ladies," as *Copperfield*.

Now came the family and for young was nearly cleared gone to the pawn-elder Dickens was Marshalsea for debt.

took leave of his son he gave him the wholesome advice which was put into Mr. Micawber's mouth some years later—the elder Dickens was undoubtedly the prototype of Micawber. "And he told me, I remember, to take warning by the Marshalsea, and to observe that if a man had £20 a year and spent £19 19s. 6d. he would be happy; but that a shilling spent the other way would make him wretched."

At about this time a cousin had become manager of a blacking business at Hungerford Stairs, and, to use Dickens's own words: "In an evil hour for me . . . seeing how I was employed from day to day, and knowing what our domestic circumstances then were, proposed that I should go into the blacking warehouse, to be as useful as I could, at a salary, I think, of six shillings a week."

The period of his life we have now to deal with is fraught with the deepest misery to the young boy. In later life he reviewed those early days only in secret, and magnified the intensity of his hopelessness and degradation. It was not until after his death that the real facts became known through the discovery of certain autobiographical chapters which he had written, and which he had utilised as fiction in the pages of *David Copperfield*, where the hero is described as working in a bottle warehouse.

"My work," he tells us, "was to cover the pots of paste blacking, first with a piece of white paper and then with a piece of blue paper; to tie them round with a string, and then to clip the paper close and neat all round, until it looked as smart as a pot of ointment from an apothecary's shop."

Here he was neglected and hopeless, working at a poor business



Mr. Micawber and David

caused a brass plate the door announcing tablishment." "Yet to school, nor do I body ever proposed least preparation was

in the case of "Mrs. Establishment for narrated in *David*

hardest time for the Charles. The house out: everything had brokers, and the imprisoned in the Before the father

quite unbecfitting his intellect and station. "No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sank into this companionship," he says. "The deep remembrance of the sense I had of being utterly without hope now, of the shame I felt in my position, of the misery it was to my young heart to believe that day by day what I had learned and thought and delighted in and raised my fancy and my emulation up by, was passing away from me little by little, never to be brought back any more, cannot be written. My whole nature was so penetrated with the grief and humiliation of such considerations that even now—famous—caressed and happy—I often forget in my dreams that I have a dear wife and children—even that I am a man, and wander desolately back to that time of my life . . .

The boy
Dickens
in the



Blacking
Warehouse,
1824

"I know that I worked from morning to night with common men and boys, a shabby child; I know that I tried, but ineffectually, not to anticipate my money, and make it last through the week; I know I have lounged through the streets insufficiently clothed and unsatisfactorily fed. I know that but for the mercy of God I might easily have been, for any care that was taken of me, a little robber or a little vagabond."

This chapter of autobiography reveals Dickens as such a very Human Boy. "In going to Hungerford Stairs of a morning," he tells us, "I could not resist the stale pastry put out at half price on trays at the confectioners in the Tottenham Court Road, and I often spent in that the money I should have kept for my dinner.

He then goes on to tell how he divided his fancy and finances between two pudding shops, one at the back of St. Martin's Church, where the

pudding was good, and little, the other in the Strand, where Lowther Arcade used to be, where was served a stout, hearty pudding, with great raisins in it, stuck in whole at great distances apart.

On Saturday nights he would go to his lodgings by way of Blackfriars, past the Golden Dog licking a golden pot, a landmark still standing, and was often lured into a show-van at the corner, to see the Wild Indian, the Fat Pig and the Little Lady.

His wage of six shillings was increased a little later to seven shillings, but he had to support himself on that money, buying his own meals at the lodging. "I suppose the lodging was paid for by my father; I certainly did not pay for it myself, and I certainly had no other assistance whatever—the making of my clothes I think, excepted . . . no advice, no counsel, no encouragement, no consolation, no support from anyone, that I can call to mind, so help me God . . . I felt keenly, however, the being so cut off from my parents, my brothers and sisters; and when my day's work was done going home to such a miserable blank. . . . One Sunday night I remonstrated with my father. . . . It was the first remonstrance I had ever made about my lot. . . . A back attic was found

for me at the house of an Insolvent-court agent, who lived in Lant Street in the Borough, where Bob Sawyer lodged many years afterwards. A bed and bedding were sent over for me and made up on the floor. The little window had a pleasant prospect of a timber yard; and when I took possession of my new abode, I thought it was a paradise."

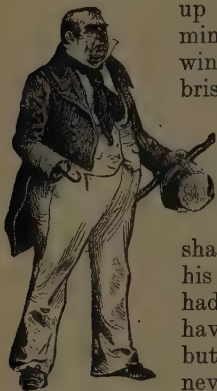
Here he was a little better off financially, for he breakfasted and took his supper with his people in the Marshalsea. They had no want of bodily comforts there, Forster says, as the father's income was still going on; and adds Forster: "I have heard him say the family lived more comfortably in prison than they had ever done, for a long while, out of it."

Soon the scene of his work was changed to Chandos Street, off the Strand, at the corner where the Civil Service Stores now stand. In Dickens's own words, we are told: "Next to the shop at the corner of Bedford Street, in Chandos Street, are two rather old-fashioned houses and shops adjoining one another. They were one then, or thrown into one, for the blacking business; and had been a butter shop. Opposite to them was, and is, a public-house, where I got my ale, under these new circumstances. The stones in the street may be smoothed by my small feet going across to it at dinner-time, and back again. The establishment was larger now, and we had one or two new boys. Bob Fagin and I had attained to great dexterity in tying



Early morning in the streets

By Cruikshank



Captain Cuttle

up the pots. I forget how many we could do in five minutes. We worked, for the light's sake, near the second window as you come from Bedford Street; and we were so brisk at it that the people used to stop and look in.

Sometimes there would be quite a little crowd there. I saw my father coming in at the door one day when we were very busy, and I wondered how he could bear it."

This must have happened after the 28th May, the date on which his father was released from the Marshalsea, and yet no effort was made by the father to relieve his son from a labour to which he was so unsuited. "I had the same wanderings about the streets as I used to have, and was just as solitary and self-dependent as before; but I had not the same difficulty in merely living. I never, however, heard a word of being taken away, or of being otherwise than quite provided for."

The family, on leaving the Marshalsea, went to lodge in Camden Town, but Charles continued his work at the blacking warehouse and went to and from the Chandos Street establishment daily,



Major Bagstock

sometimes carrying with him his dinner, "some cold hotch-potch in a small basin tied up in a handkerchief." "At last, one day, my father, and the relative so often mentioned, quarrelled; quarrelled by letter, for I took the letter from my father to him which caused the explosion, but quarrelled very fiercely. It was about me. It may have had some backward reference, in part, for anything I know, to my employment at the window."

The cousin was very angry at the letter, and young Charles was sent home; his mother, however, was for sending him back, and went to smooth over the quarrel with the cousin, but: "My father said I should go back no more, and should go to school. I do not write resentfully or angrily, for I know how all these things have worked together to make me what I am; but I never afterwards

forgot, I never shall forget, I never can forget, that my mother was warm for my being sent back."



Mr. Micawber

How great an impression this incident had on the mind of Dickens may be gathered from the following: "Until old Hungerford Market was pulled down, until old Hungerford Stairs were destroyed, and the very nature of the ground changed, I never had the courage to go back to the place where my servitude began. I never saw it. I could not endure to go near it. For many years, when I came near to Robert Warren's in the Strand, I crossed over to the opposite side of the way to avoid a certain smell of the cement they put upon the blacking-corks, which reminded me of what I was once. It was a very long time before I liked to go up Chandos Street. My old way home by the Borough made me cry, after my eldest child could speak. In my



Tom!

I am quite
ashamed I have
not returned
your leg but
you shall have
it by Harry to-
morrow
If
you would
like to purchase
my Clavis you
shall have it.

at a very
reduced price

Cheaper in
comparison
than a Leg.

Yours &c

C Dickens.

P.S. I suppose
all this time
you have had

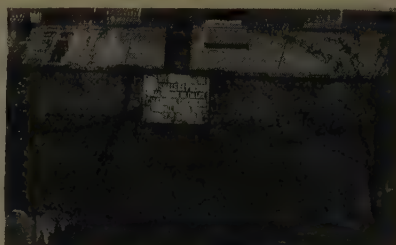
a wooden
leg. I have
weighed yours
every Saturday
Night

Where Dickens went to School in the Hampstead Road, London,
and a letter written by him to a schoolfellow

walks at night there often, by degrees I write this."

These hard boyhood had Dickens in here it was that sternest real-life the seamy side he so strongly make brighter

as Mr. G. K. Chesterton says in one of his critical essays on Dickens, "If he learnt to whitewash the universe, it was in a blacking factory that he learnt it."



Wall of the Marshalsea with
Tablet to Dickens

I have walked since then, and have come to

experiences of their effect on later years; he learnt the ties that beset of life, which endeavoured to for others, and,



13 Johnson Street,
Camden Town

The ending of this nightmare doubtless coincided with the commencement of the tenancy of the house at 29 (now No. 13) Johnson Street, Camden Town, now preserved as a David Copperfield Library for children. The father's position having improved, he was able to get his discharge from the debtors' prison and to send Charles to a school in the Hampstead Road, Wellington House Academy, or Mr. Jones's "Classical and Commercial Academy," as it was called at that time.

The fragment of autobiography to which reference has already been made supplies us with the following interesting particulars:—"There was a school in the Hampstead Road kept by Mr. Jones, a Welshman, to which my father despatched me to ask for a card of terms. The boys were at dinner, and Mr. Jones was carving for them, with a pair of holland sleeves on, when I acquitted my-

self of this commission. He came out, and gave me what I wanted; and hoped I should become a pupil. I did. At seven o'clock one morning, very soon afterwards, I went as a day scholar to Mr. Jones's establishment, which was in Mornington Place, and had its school-room sliced away by the Birmingham railway, when that change came about. The school-room, however, was not threatened by directors or civil engineers then, and there was a board over the door graced with the words 'Wellington House Academy.'"

The House, a school no longer, is still standing at No. 247 Hampstead Road, and bears a tablet affixed by the



Montague
Tigg

Dickens Fellowship to connect the house with the great novelist.

A few of Dickens's schoolfellows have left on record the following account of Dickens as a schoolboy. Says one: "My recollection of Dickens whilst at school is that of a healthy-looking boy, small but well-built, with a more than usual flow of spirits, inducing to harmless fun, seldom or never, I think, to mischief, to which so many lads at that age are prone. I cannot recall anything that then indicated he would hereafter become a literary celebrity: but perhaps he was too young then. He usually held his head more erect than lads ordinarily do, and there was a general smartness about him. His week-day dress of jacket and trousers, I can clearly remember, was what is called pepper-and-salt: and instead of the frill that most boys of his age wore then, he had a turn-down collar, so that he looked less youthful in consequence. He invented what we termed a 'lingo,' produced by the addition of a few letters of the same sound to every word: and it was our ambition, walking and talking thus along the street, to be considered foreigners. As an alternate amusement the present writer well remembers extemporising tales of some sort, and reciting them offhand, with Dickens and Danson or Tobin walking on either side of him.

"I quite remember Dickens on one occasion heading us in Drummond Street in pretending to be poor boys, and asking the passers-by for charity—especially old ladies, one of whom told us she 'had no money for beggar boys.' On these adventures, when the old ladies were quite staggered by the impudence of the demand, Dickens would explode with laughter and take to his heels.

"I met him one Sunday morning shortly after he left the school, and we very piously attended the morning service at Seymour Street Chapel. I am sorry to say Master Dickens did not attend in the slightest degree to the service, but incited me to laughter by declaring his dinner was ready and the potatoes would be spoiled; and, in fact, behaved in such a manner that it was lucky for us we were not ejected from the chapel.

"I heard of him some time after from Tobin, whom I met carrying a foaming pot of London particular in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and I then understood that Dickens was in the same or some neighbouring office.

"Many years elapsed after this before I became aware from accidentally reading 'Our School' that the brilliant and now famous Dickens was my old schoolfellow. I didn't like to intrude myself upon him, and it was not until three or four years ago, when he presided at the



Pip



David



Toots

University College Dinner made a most brilliant and him a congratulatory note fellowship. To this he sent and which I value very

"I do not remember that self in any way, or carried another schoolfellow. "My learn Greek or Latin there, there is no allusion to writings. He was a hand-of animation and animal connected with every mis-school. I do not think he Jones's scourging propen-myself, he was only a day-was a wholesome fear of tales being carried home to the parents. His personal appearance at that time is vividly brought home to me in the portrait of him taken a few years later by Mr. Lawrence. . . .



Mr. Pip

"Depend on it, he was quite a self-made man, and his wonderful knowledge and command of the English language must have been acquired by long and patient study after leaving his last school. . . .

"At about that time Penny and Saturday Magazines were published weekly, and were greedily read by us. We kept bees, white mice and other living things clandestinely in our desks, and the mechanical arts were a good deal cultivated, in the shape of coach-buildings and making pumps and boats, the motive power of which was the white mice.

"I think at that time Dickens took to writing small tales, and we had a sort of club for lending and circulating them. Dickens was also very strong in using a sort of lingo, which made us quite unintelligible to bystanders. We were very strong, too, in theatricals. We mounted small theatres, and got up very gorgeous scenery to illustrate the 'Miller and his Men,' and 'Cherry and Fair Star.' I remember the present Mr. Beverley, the scene painter, assisted us in this. Dickens was always a leader at these plays, which were occasionally presented with much solemnity before an audience of boys and in the presence of the ushers. My brother, assisted by Dickens, got up the 'Miller and his Men' in a very constructed the could tumble to of crackers. At in the last scene, destruction of the real that the police knocked violently Dickens's after ricals, to which made later on, had its origin in

at Willis's Rooms, and effective speech, that I sent reminding him of our former me a kind note in reply, much."

Dickens distinguished him-off any prizes," writes belief is that he did not and you will remember the classics in any of his some, curly-headed lad, full spirits, and probably was chievous prank in the came in for any of Mr. sity; in fact, together with pupil, and with these there



ending with the mill, were so very interfered and at the doors." taste for theat-special reference is might well have these small affairs.

II.

Early Work

ON leaving school just before his fifteenth birthday, Dickens went for a few months into the office of a solicitor named Molloy, in Symond's Inn—where in later years he located Mr. Vholes in *Bleak House*. His employment there was only of short duration; a few months



1 Raymond Buildings,
Gray's Inn



5 Bell Yard,
Doctors' Commons

later he entered the office of Ellis and Blackmore, solicitors, of 1 Holborn Court, Gray's Inn, who later moved to 1 Raymond Buildings, Gray's Inn. His wages were at first 10s. a week, then rose to 13. 6d., and for the last three months were 15s. On his first day at the office he wore a blue jacket, and a military-looking cap, which had a strap under the chin, and we are told "he carried it rather jauntily on the side of his head." His employer, Mr. Blackmore, an acquaintance of the family, described him as "exceedingly good looking and clever," with prepossessing manners. "He came to me in May, 1827," says Mr. Blackmore, "and continued until November, 1828. Why he left I do not remember, but fancy he disliked the drudgery of the office, and felt, perhaps, equal to better occupation."

The desk at which he sat is now a prominent exhibit in the Dickens House, London.

It was while in this office that he learned much of the ways of lawyers, which knowledge served him in later life for the characters of Dodson and Fogg, Mr. Perker, Sampson Brass, Mr. Tulkinghorn, and others of that long list.

Meanwhile his father had secured a position as a reporter on one of the London papers, and later joined the staff of "The Mirror of Parliament," brother-in-law, a barrister of This fact prompted to fit himself fession of a therefore set celestial or dia-to acquire "a tire command



P. J. T. House, Staple Inn

started by his John Barrow, Gray's Inn. doubtless young Charles for the pro-reporter. He out "with a bolical energy" perfect and en-of the mystery

January 3rd 1828 All this to the
 H. Ellis - Address v^t Pratt 17th March 1828 is
 Carriage parcel with writ and ^{in Duchy. hand}
 notice of declon _____ ✓ " 0
 9th

Searle to M^c Connell
 Carriage parcel with writ of _____ ✓ " 2 4
 ally & affd^t
 Proper - Head Porter Xmas box _____ ✓ " 5 "
 10th

Salary _____ ✓ " 13 6
 11th

Postage of letter ret^d from _____ ✓ " 3
 Miss Killick _____
 Price & P.

Porter & book^d parcel _____ ✓ " 2
 H. Ellis - Searle to M^c Connell
 1st day writ of ally _____ ✓ " 1 "
 Proper - 12th

2 quires of forms of declon _____ ✓ " 6 "
 goods in debt 3/- do money 3/-
 ✓ £ 1 8 11

Facsimile page of Petty Cash book kept by Dickens
 in 1828 at the office of Ellis & Blackmore, Grays Inn

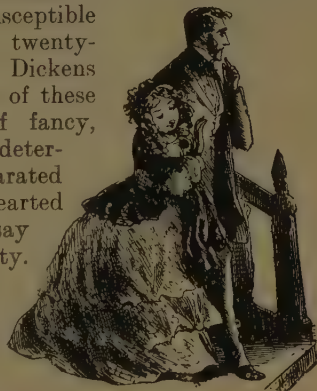
of shorthand writing and reading," and soon found himself, as David Copperfield did subsequently, "plunged into a sea of perplexity" that brought him in a few weeks to "the confines of despair." Not only did he master shorthand, but the day after he had reached eighteen, the requisite age for admission, he applied for a reader's ticket at the British Museum. Here he studied to gain that knowledge of which he had been deprived in earlier years, and his name appears on the books of the Museum for the next three years. During this time he was employed as a reporter in the Courts of Doctors' Commons, and as one of the judgments in his handwriting of a case heard in November, 1830, preserved in St. Bartholomew's Church, contains the address of Dickens as 5 Bell Yard, Doctors' Commons, it would appear that he was working on his own account. This was a bold step for a young man, but it gave him time to study in his hours of leisure in the day time, and left him free in the evening to visit the theatres, to study especially the light comedy of Mathews, the celebrated actor of Covent Garden. He did not, as yet, however, think seriously of the stage as a profession.

It was at about this time that he became acquainted with Henry Kolle, and this association led to his introduction to a young lady, Maria Beadnell, who thenceforward was destined to have a dominating influence in his life. Kolle, a clerk in a bank, probably Smith, Payne and Smith's, at No. 1 Lombard Street, where Maria's father held an important position, was engaged to another daughter, Anne. Young Dickens promptly fell in love with the youngest daughter, Maria, who coquetted with him for a long time.

As a newspaper reporter Dickens had no status at all in the eyes of the respectable banker's family, and what correspondence passed between the two lovers was done through the intermediary of Henry Kolle. It was then to improve his position that Dickens made an application to the manager at Covent Garden Theatre, but a severe cold prevented him from keeping the appointment, and, what is more important, from adopting the stage as a profession.

The influence of Maria Beadnell on the susceptible youth can hardly be exaggerated. Nearly twenty-five years after he had parted from her Dickens again corresponded with her, and in one of these letters he confessed that "Whatever of fancy, romance, energy, passion, aspiration, and determination belong to me, I never have separated and never shall separate from the hard-hearted little woman—you—whom it is nothing to say I would have died for with the greatest alacrity. It is a matter of perfect certainty to me that I began to fight my way out of poverty and obscurity with one perpetual idea of you."

It is thought that a clandestine engagement existed for about three years, during



Flora

which time Dickens used every endeavour to improve his position. A certain advancement did result, but not sufficient to satisfy him, and to entitle him to claim Maria: correspondence passed between them, and to an avowal of his attachment to her she answered him coldly—and he went away.

This correspondence of a young man of twenty-two (printed privately) is one of the romances of literature, and once again demonstrates the great force of love. "With one perpetual idea" of his Maria, Dickens fought his way. Having served his apprenticeship in the Courts, he obtained a position on the parliamentary reporting staff of the "Mirror of Parliament," and on the "True Sun," where he met his lifelong friend and subsequent biographer, John Forster, the dramatic critic of the paper. Forster noted him as having a "keen animation of look" at the time of his first introduction, which was the occasion of a strike among the reporters, when Dickens acted as their spokesman and carried their case to a successful issue.

At the age of twenty-two Dickens obtained a position on the staff of the "Morning Chronicle" at a salary of five guineas weekly, and a new sphere of adventure opened to him. His paper was an important one, and on its behalf young Dickens was sent to Edinburgh, Exeter, Bristol, Bath, Ipswich, and elsewhere, to report the speeches of the members of the government. To be near the office of the paper (332 Strand), he took rooms in Cecil Street, Strand, but as Dickens wrote in a letter to Kolle they "put too much water in their hashes, lost a nutmeg grater, attended on me most miserably, etc., etc., and so detesting petty miseries, I gave them warning." His next apartments were at 15 Buckingham Street, Strand, where later David Copperfield was to lodge with Mrs. Crupp in a set of rooms with a view of the river, consisting of "a little half-blind entry where you could hardly see anything, a little stone-blind pantry where you could see nothing at all, and a sitting-room and a bedroom."

By the end of 1834 he had installed himself in a "three pair back" at 13 Furnival's Inn.

Charles Mackay, the assistant sub-editor of the "Chronicle," described Dickens at this period as "a fresh, handsome, genial young man, with a profusion of brown hair, a bright eye and a hearty manner, rather inclined to what was once called 'dandyism' in his attire." He was one of the twelve parliamentary reporters of the "Chronicle," and "had the reputation of being the most rapid, the most accurate, and the most trustworthy reporter then engaged on the London press."

Speaking at a dinner of the Newspaper Press Fund in



Mary Hogarth from her work off
Pickwickians



No. 1.

THE

[PRICE 1s.]

POSTHUMOUS PAPERS

OF THE

PICKWICK CLUB

CONTAINING A FAITHFUL RECORD OF THE
PERAMBULATIONS, PERILS, TRAVELS, ADVENTURES

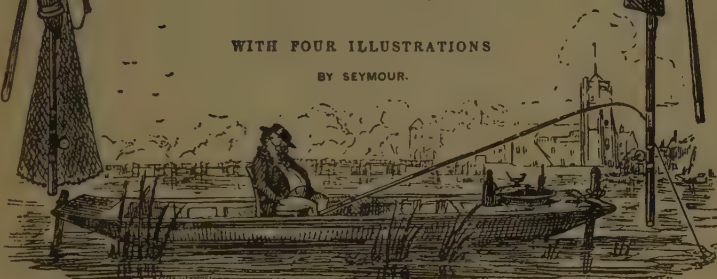
AND

Sporting Transactions
OF THE CORRESPONDING MEMBERS.

EDITED BY "BOZ."

WITH FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

BY SEYMOUR.



LONDON: CHAPMAN & HALL, 186, STRAND.

MDCCLXXXVI.

Cover of the first monthly part of *The Pickwick Papers*, 1836. Part of the series presented by Dickens to his sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth

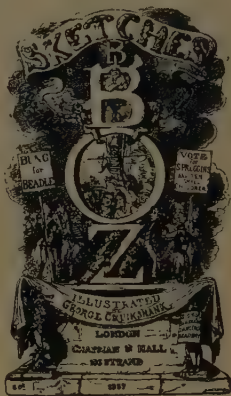
1865, he gave a summary of these reporting days. "I have pursued the calling of a reporter under circumstances of which my brethren here can have no adequate conception. I have often transcribed for the printer from my shorthand notes, important public speeches, writing on the palm of my hand, by the light of a dark lantern, in a post chaise and four, galloping through a wild country, and through the dead of the night, at the then surprising rate of 15 miles an hour. I have worn my knees by writing on them in the old back row of the old gallery of the old House of Commons; and I have worn my feet by standing to write in a preposterous pen in the old House of Lords, where we used to be huddled together like so many sheep. I have been in my time belated on miry by-roads, towards the small hours, forty or fifty miles from London, in a wheel-less carriage, with exhausted horses and drunken post boys, and have got back in time for publication, to be forgotten compliments by my editor."

"To the wholesome paper work," he told "when I was a very stantly refer my first

In the midst of all ties Dickens wrote his fiction, a story in the entitled "Mr. Minns and tells us he "dropped at twilight, with fear dark letter-box, in a court in Fleet Street,"

"in all the glory of to Westminster Hall half an hour, because his eyes were "so dimmed with joy and pride, that they could not bear the street, and were not fit to be seen there."

These sketches appeared fairly regularly throughout 1834, and for the first two months of 1835; they were not paid for, and when the "Evening Chronicle" was started early in that year as an offshoot of the morning paper on which Dickens was engaged, the young reporter was asked to write some stories for it similar to those which were appearing in the "Monthly Magazines." He seized the opportunity thus afforded him, and asked for an increase in salary as recompense, and received two guineas additional weekly. The new work appeared weekly under the general title of "Sketches of London," and were signed "Boz." Of this name, Dickens tells us in his preface to *The Pickwick Papers* that it was "the nickname of a pet child, a younger brother, whom I dubbed Moses, in honour of the 'Vicar of Wakefield,' which, being facetiously pronounced through the nose, became Boses, and, being shortened, became Boz. Boz was a very familiar household word to me, long before I was an author, and so I came to adopt it."



training of severe news-the New York editors, young man, I con-successes."

these reporting activi-first contribution to "Monthly Magazine" His Cousin," which he stealthily one evening and trembling, into a dark office, up a dark and when it appeared print" he walked down and turned into it for

Scenes from "Pickwick"



Fleet Street



Fleet Street



Brick Lane



Mr. Pickwick



Clifford's Inn



Cuddesley Church



Manor Farm



Bury Prison



Spaniards



Winkles house, Birmingham



School, Bury St. Edmunds



School, Bury St. Edmunds



River



Fleet Prison



Fleet Prison



Rochester Bridge

In the autumn of 1835 Dickens contributed a series "Characters," signed "Life in London"; of this nom de plume first of these sketches specially drawn by were collected and volumes, priced at a 1836. These *Sketches* first published

The name of Dickens was becoming well the world of letters, public also; and a prising firm of publisher and Hall waited

at his chambers in Furnival's Inn to propose "a something that should be published monthly in shilling numbers."

"The idea propounded to me was that the monthly something should be a vehicle for certain plates to be executed by Mr. Seymour; and there was a notion either on the part of that admirable humorous artist, or of my visitor, that a 'Nimrod Club,' the members of which were to go out shooting, fishing, and so forth, and getting themselves into difficulties through their want of dexterity, would be the best means of introducing these."

Dickens objected to writing up to pictures, but was willing that the pictures should be done to illustrate his story. Finally Dickens had his way, and the first part of *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* appeared in April, 1836. Dickens was to receive £14 for each part, and he seemed to be very well satisfied with the arrangement, for he wrote concerning it to his intended wife: "My dearest Kate, the work will be no joke, but the emolument is too tempting to resist."

It is really extraordinary and remarkable that a book written under such circumstances should turn out to be one of the world's classics, a book without a rival.

On the publication of the first part Dickens married Kate, the daughter of George Hogarth, also engaged on the "Chronicle" newspaper, and the honeymoon was spent at Chalk, near Gravesend, in a little cottage now marked with a tablet.

It was in the splendid spirit of humour that Dickens described his hero in the very first lines of the book as "the immortal Pickwick"; but never was prophecy so warranted. The Club held its first recorded



Mr. Pickwick

1835 Dickens contributed "Scenes and "Tibbs," to "Bell's but no explanation is forthcoming. The with illustrations George Cruikshank published in two guinea, in February, by Boz formed the volume by Dickens, ens, or rather "Boz," known, not only to but to the general member of an enter-lishers named Chap-on the young author





Dickens in 1837

A portrait by Samuel Laurence



The Pond on which Mr. Pickwick skated



meeting on May 12th, 1827, and the Pickwickians set out on their memorable journey to Rochester the day following. Exactly one hundred years later this event was celebrated by The Dickens Fellowship; the old Commodore coach again ran to Rochester with its load of mirth-provoking immortals; a unique celebration of the centenary of a man who never lived going on a purely fictitious journey.

Alive as *The Pickwick Papers* is to us, it was just as much alive to his creator, for we find the following appearing in the letters of Dickens at this time. "I am so engaged with my respectable friend Pickwick, on whom I have only just commenced, that I cannot get out this week" . . . "I have at this moment got Pickwick and his friends in the Rochester coach and they are going on swimmingly. . . . I want to get them from the Ball to the Inn before I go to bed, and I think that will take me until one or two o'clock at the earliest."

The book was an immense success, and became the chief topic of conversation. Shop windows were filled with Pickwick cigars, hats, canes, coats, and Weller corduroys. Pickwick Clubs (of a convivial character) were started. Booksellers displayed such publications as the "Pickwick Comic Almanac," "Pickwick Treasury of Wit," "Pickwickian Songster," "Sam Weller's Pickwickian Jest Book," and "Sam Weller's Favourite Song Book." Even to-day we have Pickwick Biscuits, Pickwick Peas, Pickwick Parchment, Pickwick Pens and Pickwick Cigars. It was played at the theatre before the final parts were issued, and has been translated into nearly every language, including Russian, Dutch, Bohemian, Danish. It also appears in Braille and Shorthand, and a large number of books have been written on Pickwick including an encyclopædia.

An amusing story was told by Carlyle of a solemn clergyman who had been administering spiritual consolation to a sick person; having finished, satisfactorily as he thought, and got out of the room, he heard the sick person exclaim, "Well, thank God, 'Pickwick' will be out in ten days, anyway."



The Village of Pickwick, near Bath

The original Mr. Pickwick, as outlined by Seymour in his first sketch, was a tall thin man. It was Chapman of the publishing firm, Chapman and Hall, who suggested the portly figure we know so well, and to assist the artist he described a friend of his who lived at Richmond, a certain John Foster, "a fat old beau who would wear, in spite of the ladies' protests, drab tights and black gaiters."

Before the second number of *The Pickwick Papers* appeared, Seymour shot himself; Dickens had his first and only interview with him but forty-eight hours before. A new artist had to be found for the third number, and choice fell upon R. W. Buss, who was then very well known. His work, however, did not suit the style of the publication, so he was accordingly replaced in number four by Hablôt K. Browne, better known as "Phiz," who proved so successful that he continued to illustrate Dickens's works almost without interruption for the next twenty years.

It is interesting to note that W. M. Thackeray, at that time quite unknown, was attempting drawing as a profession, and hearing that Dickens was on the look-out for an artist to illustrate *Pickwick*, applied for the position. "I recollect walking up to his chambers in Furnival's Inn," he said at one of the Royal Academy banquets, "with two or three drawings in my hand which, strange to say, he did not find suitable."

The first few numbers of *The Pickwick Papers* hung fire; indeed, it is said that the circulation was only about five hundred; but with the appearance of Sam Weller in the fifth number, success was assured, and reprints of the earlier numbers to the extent of tens of thousands were called for. Seymour and Buss's plates had consequently to be re-drawn by Phiz, and the existence of original Seymour and Buss plates is proof of a genuine first edition, which commands a price between fifteen hundred and two thousand pounds for the nineteen green-covered parts.

The first anniversary of the publication of the first number of *The Pickwick Papers* was celebrated by Dickens inviting his friends and the publishers to a dinner, and henceforth it became customary with Dickens to celebrate in a similar manner all such anniversaries of his works.

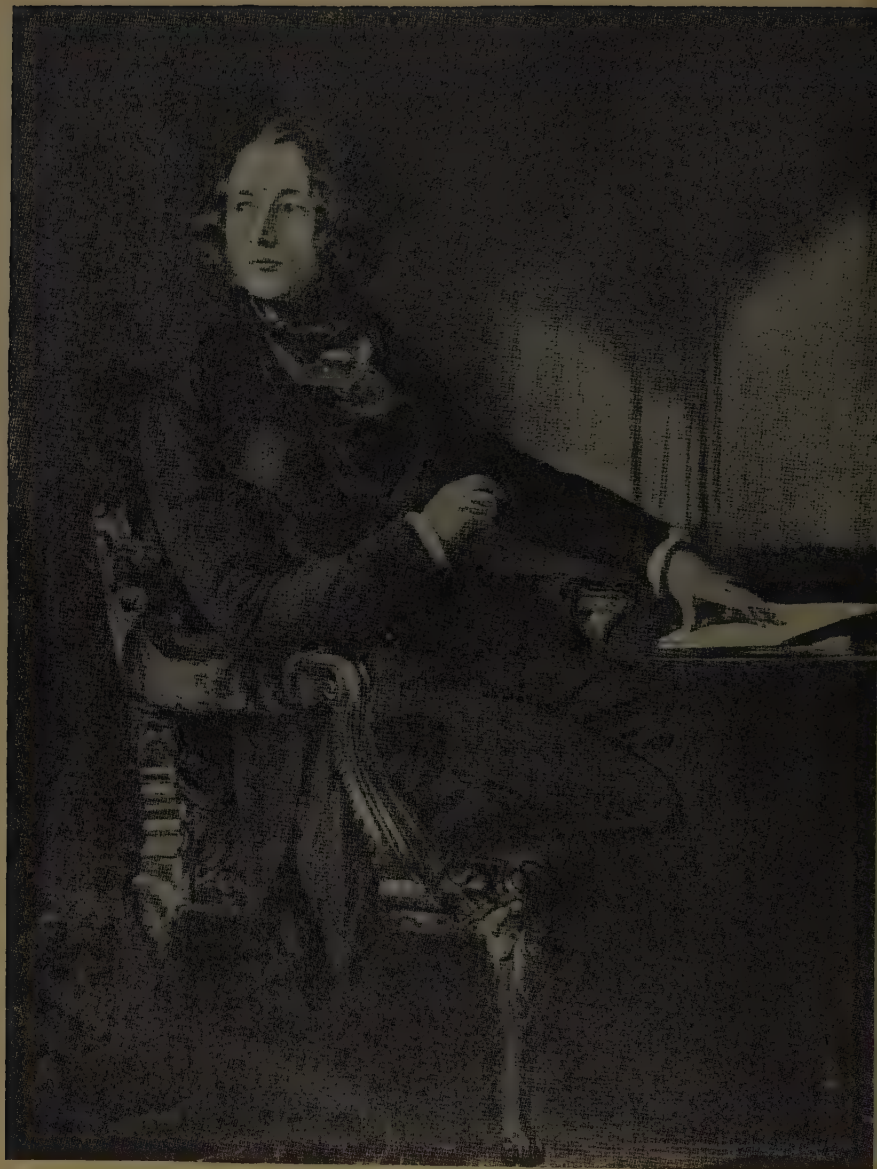
Dickens was much sought after as a result of the remarkable success of this work, and his first publisher, Macrone, who held the copyright of *Sketches by Boz*, conceived the idea of re-publishing them in monthly parts and reaping a rich harvest by imitating the method of publication. It cost Dickens and his new publishers no less than two thousand pounds to buy back the copyright, and so protect their own interests.



Sam Weller



Mr. Pickwick



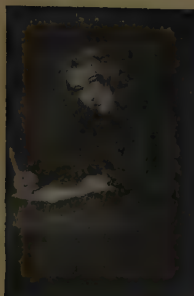
Charles Dickens in 1839

From the painting by Daniel Maclise, R.A.

Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1840 ; and now in
the National Portrait Gallery

III.

Novelist



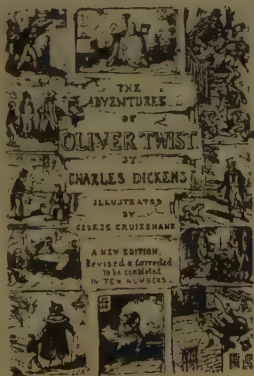
DICKENS'S twenty-fifth birthday found him a famous man. *The Pickwick Papers* had been running nearly a year. Everybody was reading the now familiar green-covered monthly, talk-

ing about the adventures of Mr. Pickwick and his friends, and captivated by the fresh humour of Sam Weller. In addition to this work he had supplied the libretto for two comic operas performed at the St. James's Theatre, had written a little volume, *Sunday Under Three Heads*, advocating a saner observance of the Sabbath (such has since come to pass), and had accepted the editorship of a new monthly magazine, "Bentley's Miscellany," for which he promised to write a series of articles (later published as *The Mudfog Papers*), and a new story, *Oliver Twist*, which commenced in the issue of February, 1837.

Just prior to this, the first son had been born to the young couple, and the restrictions of chambers at Furnival's Inn, to say nothing of the author's growing fame, made a move imperative; and the tenancy of No. 48 Doughty Street commenced in March, 1837. This was the first house of Dickens's married life, and is now, thanks to the Dickens Fellowship, a Library and Museum vested in Trustees. It contains the finest library of Dickensiana in the world, and a large number of interesting items, many personally associated with Dickens, to which additions are being constantly made.

While still writing the monthly portions of *The Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist*, and editing the "Miscellany," Dickens found time to edit the *Memoirs of Grimaldi*, in which his father helped as amanuensis, to write *Gentlemen*, and to publication in monthly stories to follow both and *Oliver Twist*.

With all these his attention, relaxation; his letters horse-riding, on the with his friend was a trip to Bel-and Phiz, followed at Broadstairs, the sequent visits almost must have worked



Sketches of Young arrange for the pub-numbers of other *The Pickwick Papers*

matters to occupy tion was not fortell of plenty of outskirts of London, Forster, and there gium, with his wife by a summer holiday first of thirteen sub-yearly. Dickens at great pressure in

Oliver Twist

or, The Parish Boys' Progress.

By Boz



Illustrated by George Cruikshank.

Chapter the Twelfth.

In which Oliver is taken better care of than he
ever was before. With some particulars concerning
a certain picture.

The coach rattled away down
Mount Pleasant and up Edmonton
Street - over nearly the same ground
as that which Oliver had traversed
when he first entered London in the
company with the Dodger - and
turning a different way ~~at last~~
when it reached the canal at Tollymore
stopped at length ~~in front of~~ before
a neat house in a quiet shady
~~street near Pentonville~~ Here a bed was
prepared instant care of him, in

those days; he was never able to advance his work even by a single number, but always wrote the next part ready for almost immediate publication. Thus side by side were written the various instalments of *The Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist*: the one so full of light-hearted boisterous fun, turned out with a spontaneity seldom afterwards attained; the other a serious story of the criminal and the outcast, a vigorous onslaught on the Poor Law system, reform in which owes so much to this work: and in spite of the fact that the story deals mostly with the seamy side of life, there is nothing in it



George Cruikshank
Oliver Twist asks for more

that is repellent, nothing coarse or vulgar. It is truly a triumph of literary art.

Dickens had already promised the publishers of *The Pickwick Papers* to provide a successor to that publication, and was now troubled by his promise to Bentley of a story of the Gordon Riots to follow *Oliver Twist*. The pressure of all these undertakings weighed heavily on him, and his friend John Forster, valued counsellor until the very end, and biographer afterwards, was called in to help him out of the difficulty, with the result that an agreement was made with Bentley whereby the editorship of the Miscellany was handed over to Harrison Ainsworth, and the copyright of *Oliver Twist* repurchased at a cost exceeding two thousand pounds.



Photo by]

[T. W. Tyrrell

Mr. Shaw's Academy at Bowes. The original of Dotheboys Hall

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Will give the most respectable References to the Parents of others at the above Seminary, as well as to those who have completed their Education with Mr. SHAW.

ALL LETTERS MUST BE POST PAID.

One of the Business Cards of the Original of Squeers in *Nicholas Nickleby*

This step, in which he was assisted by Chapman and Hall, enabled Dickens to return to his original publishers, and to make headway with the new story, *Nicholas Nickleby*.

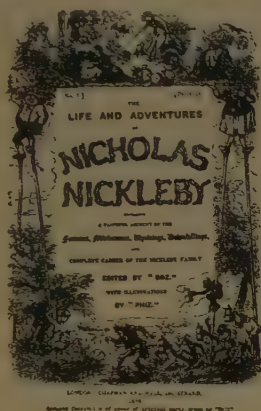
As an example of the value which his work had attained in a period of two years, whereas the payment for *The Pickwick Papers* was fourteen pounds per monthly part, the agreement for *Nicholas Nickleby* stipulated a monthly payment of £150, with copyright reverting to Dickens after five years. Such was the enormous success of this story that on its completion his publishers made him the handsome gift of £1500. In addition to this they presented to him the portrait painted by Daniel Maclise, which formed the frontispiece to the volume. This portrait now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

It should also be stated here that in respect to *The Pickwick Papers*, the publishers presented Dickens with a cheque for £500 on the publication of the twelfth part, and payments made to in all, to £3000. It lishers themselves £14,000 from the *Pickwick Papers* in that the voluntary the author amounted is said that the pub-made a profit of publication of *The parts alone*.

Just as in *Oliver* attacked the Poor other question of special attention in *Nicholas Nickleby*, deplorable system of Yorkshire had at him. "I cannot call said in his Preface came to hear about when I was a not very robust child, sitting in bye-places near Rochester Castle, with a head full of Partridge, Strap, Tom Pipes and Sancho Panza; but I know that my first impressions of them were picked up at that time, and that they were somehow or other connected with a suppurated abscess that some boy had come home with, in consequence of his Yorkshire guide, philosopher, and friend, having ripped it open with an inky pen-knife. The impression made upon me, however made, never left me. I was always curious about Yorkshire schools—fell, long afterwards and at sundry times, into the way of hearing more about them—at last, having an audience, resolved to write about them."

However, to make sure of his facts, he resolved to pay a visit to Yorkshire before commencing the book, and accordingly, in the company of "Phiz," made the journey by coach in the winter of 1838, in just such inclement, snowy weather as he pictured in the book.

Squeers was drawn from life; William Shaw, of Bowes Academy, was the original. In Dickens's diary for 1838, among the very few entries it contains is this significant one, under the date of February



Twist Dickens had Law system, so an-reform occupied his writing the story of For some years the boarding schools in tracted and repelled to mind, now," he to the book, "how I Yorkshire schools

You will judge from this that he has been brought very low.

"When ~~at~~ your ~~eyes~~ ^{eyes} ~~revel~~ ^{revel} that you remembered for a teacher had done this to my ~~face~~ ^{face} and ~~stripped~~ ^{stripped} upon his body with his feet and ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~himself~~ ^{himself} ~~which~~ ^{which} I will not follow up my pen with describing, he assaulted my ~~me~~ ^{me} with dreadful violence, dashed her to the earth, and drove her heels some several miles into her head. A very little more ~~she~~ ^{she} ~~death~~ ^{death} ~~she~~ ^{she} and it must have entered her skull. We have a medical certificate that if it had the ~~entire~~ ^{entire} side of her skull would have affected the brain. ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~himself~~ ^{himself}.

'He and my mother were then the victims of his fury. Since which we have suffered ~~greatly~~ ^{greatly} very much inwardly, which leads us to the avowing belief that we have received some injury ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~and~~ ^{and} in our misdeeds, especially as the marks of violence are visible externally. I am screaming ^{out loud} all the ~~time~~ ^{time}, I unite and so is my brother which takes off my attention rather, and I hope with excuse mis takes.

"The monster having satiated his thirst for blood ran away, taking with him a boy of desperate ~~character~~ ^{character} that he had excited



2: "Shaw the schoolmaster we saw to-day is the man in whose school several boys went blind some time since from gross neglect. The case was tried, and the verdict went against him. It must have been between 1823 and 1826. Look this up in the newspapers."

In a letter to Mrs. S. C. Hall, he explained how he went in an assumed name, taking a plausible letter to an old Yorkshire attorney in town, telling him how a friend had been left a widow and wanted to place her boys at a Yorkshire school, in hopes of thawing the frozen compassion of her relations. "The man of business," he continues, "gave me an introduction to one or two schools, but at night he came down to the inn where I was stopping, and after much hesitation and confusion—he was a large-headed, flat-nosed, red-faced, old fellow—said with a degree of feeling one would not have given him credit for, that the matters had been upon his mind all day—that they were sad places for mothers to send their orphan boys to—that he hoped I would not give him up as my adviser—but that she had better do anything with them—let them hold horses, run errands—fling them in any way upon the mercy of the World—rather than trust them there. This was an attorney, a well-fed man of business, and a rough Yorkshireman."

Not far from the notorious school kept by Shaw is the church yard, in which Shaw and his son lie buried. Nearby is a stone to the memory of George Ashton Taylor, aged 19, "who died suddenly at Mr. William Shaw's Academy 1822."

This was the grave visited by Dickens, as he tells us in the above-mentioned letter.

"The country for miles round was covered, when I was there, with deep snow. There is an old church near the school, and the first grave-stone I stumbled on that dreary winter afternoon was placed above the grave of a boy, eighteen long years old, who had died—suddenly the inscription said: I suppose his heart broke—the camel falls down 'suddenly' when they heap the last load upon his back—died at that wretched place. I think his ghost put Smike into my head, upon the spot."

The strength of this mute appeal to Dickens's sense of justice was very great, for the letter states further:—"Depend upon it that the rascalities of those Yorkshire schoolmasters cannot easily be exaggerated, and that I have kept down the strong truth and thrown as much comicality over it as I could, rather than disgust and weary the reader with its fouler aspects. The identical scoundrel you speak of I saw—curiously enough. His name is Shaw; the action was tried (I believe) eight or ten years since, and if I am not much mistaken another action was brought against him by the parents of a miserable child, a cancer

in whose head he opened with an inky penknife, and so caused his death."

Immediately on his return, on the eve of his twenty-sixth birthday, Dickens commenced the first chapter. "I wrote four slips last night," he wrote to Forster, "so you see the beginning is made. And what is more, I can go on."

This new work brought Dickens many fresh admirers. Sidney Smith, who had previously expressed his doubts of Dickens's genius, was compelled to admit, "Nickleby is *very good*. I stood out against Mr. Dickens as long as I could, but he has conquered me."

Barnaby Rudge was already well on the way when increasing fame and family made it necessary for Dickens to leave Doughty Street for a larger house. This he found in No. 1 Devonshire Terrace, facing Regent's Park, which he occupied for the next twelve years (1839-52). It was fated, however, that *Barnaby Rudge* was not to be his next publication. The previous method of issuing stories in monthly parts had led to a series of aggravating plagiarisms, and had also the disadvantage of thirty days' interval between the appearance of each part. Desiring to get into closer touch with his readers, who had assured him by their numerous letters of their affectionate regard, Dickens conceived the idea of a weekly publication wholly from his pen, which should not only contain a new long story, but should "take advantage of all passing events, and vary the form of the papers by throwing them into sketches, essays, tales, adventures, letters from imaginary correspondents, and so forth, so as to diversify the contents as much as possible." Such was the brief outline of his plan contained in a letter written to

Forster.

The outcome of this was "Master Humphrey's Clock," the name and the idea of a clock being taken from a shop of one Humphrey, a clock-maker at Barnard Castle whom Dickens had visited when in Yorkshire on the Dotheboys Hall investigations.

Meanwhile a visit to see Walter Savage Landor at Bath was productive of the character of Little Nell, who may well be said to have had her birthplace at Landor's house there, No. 35 St. James's Square, and *The Old Curiosity Shop* appeared week by week in this new periodical.



Little Nell and her Grandfather

In Little Nell was enshrined all the love he felt for the memory of his wife's sister, Mary Hogarth, whose death still continued to affect him greatly, particularly as the anniversary came round. Such was the hold that this sweet character in fiction had over the minds of thousands of people, that Dickens received urgent requests from all quarters not to let her die. O'Connell, the great Irish agitator, was so overcome by the pathetic chapter describing her death that he said, with tears in his eyes, "He should not have killed her. She was too good," and Lord Jeffrey and Macready, capable critics both, confessed themselves deeply affected by the great power and beauty of this episode.

Dickens himself, not unnaturally under the circumstances, was more than ever a part of his character and a sharer of its sorrows. "I am breaking my heart over this story, and cannot bear to finish it," he wrote to George Cattermole, the artist who was illustrating it. "Dear Mary died yesterday when I think of this story," he said in another letter; and again, "When I first began to keep my thoughts upon this ending of the tale, I resolved to try and do something which might be read by people about whom Death had been, with a softened feeling, and with consolation. . . . After you left last night, I took my desk upstairs; and writing until four o'clock this morning, finished the old story. It makes me very melancholy to think that all these people are lost to me for ever, and I feel as if I never could become attached to any new set of characters."

It was *The Old Curiosity Shop* that fixed Dickens in the heart of the English-speaking race. It was only Dickens who could endow a shop with life; every shop was to him the door of romance. Mr. Chesterton, in his presses the wonder had so many schemes times for the establishment of a weekly journal, never "The Street," and "He could have written an exquisite romance called the 'Baker's Shop,' to keep company with the 'Old Curiosity Shop.' Some incomparable baker he invented and forgot; some more than mortal oilman is lost to us for ever; some gorgeous chemist might have been; but the 'Old Curiosity Shop' he did linger by; its tale he did happen to tell," and it is



our loving memory of Little Nell and her grandfather that makes us linger outside a certain, so-called "Old Curiosity Shop" in a street just off Lincoln's Inn Fields, and picture it as the home of the faithful little soul. Yet the house claiming to be "The Old Curiosity Shop" has no association whatever either with the novelist or with the book.



Dolly Varden

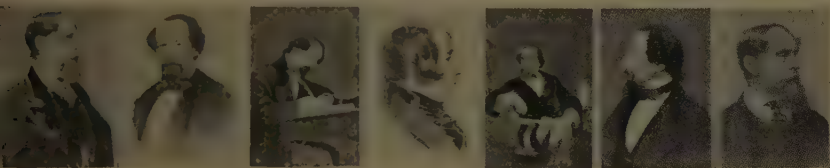
A sketch by Halbot K. Browne (Phiz)

Barnaby Rudge was the next story in "Master Humphrey's Clock," the publication of which terminated on its conclusion.

In 1841 Dickens and his wife visited Edinburgh, where was given the first public dinner in honour of the young Englishman of twenty-nine, a signal tribute from the land that has produced such immortals as Burns and Scott. Professor Wilson (Christopher North) was in the chair, and a great gathering of three hundred gave him welcome. The subsequent social engagements, including the Freedom of the City, the dinners, suppers, parties and theatres "beat all natur'," as he expressed it in a letter, so that even for one who loved the admiration of his fellow man there was a surfeit of it. He yearned for his old friends and his own fireside. "I sigh for Devonshire Terrace and Broadstairs, for Battledore and Shuttlecock; I want to dine in a blouse with you (Forster) and Mac (Macready)."

However, before actually returning to London, he tasted the beauties of the Highlands, and the grandeur of the Pass of Glencoe, which latter impressed him tremendously.

On his return he entered into an agreement for a new work in parts,

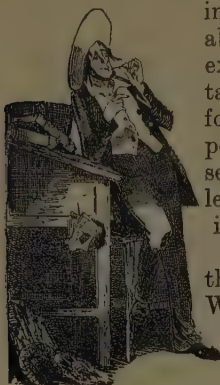


at £200 monthly: but this was not to commence for a year, so as to allow an interval for the American trip, which he took at the urgent solicitation of Washington Irving. To cross the Atlantic had been under consideration for a long time; "to set my foot upon the soil I have trodden in my day dreams many a time, and whose sons (and daughters) I yearn to be among."

The departure of Dickens and his wife from Liverpool in the Boston steamer took place on January 4th, 1842, the children being left behind in the care of Macready, the famous actor, and his wife. The passage occupied eighteen days, and was a very stormy one. "Only a dream can call it up again," he wrote, "in all its fury, rage and passion. . . . I never expected to see the day again, and resigned myself to God as well as I could."

The reception at Boston was tumultuous. People crowded in and out of the hotel in an endeavour to obtain a glimpse of the creator of *Little Nell* and *Mr. Pickwick*.

"I can do nothing that I want to do, go nowhere where I want to go, and see nothing that I want to see," he wrote. "If I turn into the street, I am followed by a multitude. If I stay at home, the house becomes, with callers, like a fair. If I visit a public institution with only one friend, the directors come down, incontinently waylay me in the yard, and address me in a long speech. I go to a party



Mr. Scadder

in the evening, and am so enclosed and hemmed about by people, stand where I will, that I am exhausted for want of air. I dine out, and have to talk about everything to everybody. I go to church for quiet, and there is a violent rush to neighbouring pews, and the clergyman preaches at me. I take my seat in a railroad car, and the very conductor won't leave me alone. . . . I have no rest or peace, and am in a perpetual worry."

Invitations arrived to visit almost every city in the Union, and the tribute he received from the New World was, in Forster's words, due to "the hearty, cordial and human side of his genius," which completely fascinated the American people, for Dickens "was almost universally regarded by them as a kind of embodied protest against what was believed to be worst in the institutions of England."

On his return to England, Dickens set about writing a record of his American visit, which was published in two volumes under the title of *American Notes*. The task was a difficult one, but as he wrote to Longfellow, he endeavoured to speak both honestly and fairly. "I know that those in America for whom I care will like me better for the book. A great many people will like me infinitely the worse, and make a devil of me straight away." And so it was; the more cultured and thoughtful citizens of the United States regarded the book with approval. Emerson considered the lesson it taught "not quite lost" in that it "held bad manners up so that churls could see the deformed." Longfellow spoke of it as "jovial and good natured, and at times severe," to be "read with delight and, for the most part, approbation." But on the other hand, among certain sections, and by probably the majority, it was received with resentment and scorn, and the author soundly rated for his lack of courtesy in writing such a book after such open-hearted hospitality and princely welcome. They failed to understand the spirit in which the *Notes* were penned, in spite of the clear and unmistakable dedication:—"To those friends of mine in America who, giving me a welcome, I must ever gratefully and proudly remember, left my judgment free; and who, loving their country, can bear the truth when it is told good-humouredly, and in a kind spirit."

The adverse feeling that was expressed was not mollified by the American incidents in his next book, *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843), in spite of the fact that Dickens criticised adversely only what he judged to be blameworthy, holding always the highest opinion of what was best in America, and the same contempt for what was worst. Dickens had attacked in precisely similar way the different social evils in his

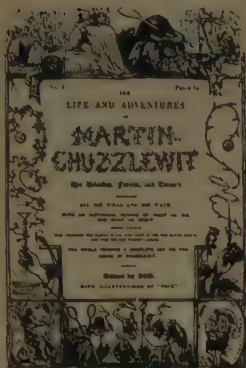


Mark Tapley and Martin Chuzzlewit

own country; so the
bers of the American
can to realise that
animus in what he
was that when he
States some twenty-
reception was prodigious, and to-day the
American people will
place in their admira-

The sale of *Martin* monthly parts proved
ment to Dickens. He
too sanguinely, for
His household and
were increasing
and on a hint from
they would probably be availing themselves of a clause in the agreement
to withhold £50 of the £200 agreed monthly payment, Dickens entered
into an agreement with the printing firm of Bradbury and Evans
that, in consideration of them advancing to him a sum of £2800,
which would clear off all his liabilities, he would assign to them a
fourth share of whatever he wrote during the ensuing eight years.

Concurrently with *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *A Christmas Carol* was
written. It was published a few days before Christmas, 1843, and
carried its message of love and goodwill to thousands of homes. This
was the beginning of the famous series of Christmas books, *The Chimes*,
The Cricket on the Hearth,
The Battle of Life and *The
Haunted Man* and when in
later years the price of
these annuals was reduced
from five shillings to four-
pence it was no uncommon
thing to sell a quarter of a
million in the first week of
publication. When present-
ing a copy to his
American friend, Professor
Felton, Dickens wrote
"..... A Christmas Carol
in prose; being a short
story of Christmas by
Charles Dickens. Over
which Christmas Carol
Charles Dickens wept and
laughed and wept again,
and excited himself in a
most extraordinary manner
in the composition; and



MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT & SAILOR, AND OTHERS
Illustrated by H. K. BRADLEY
Revised Edition of some of the original illustrations to "MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT"

more thinking mem-
people at length be-
he had no personal
wrote. The result
again visited the
five years later, his
gious, and to-day the
accept no second
tion of his genius.
Chuzzlewit in
a great disappoint-
had hoped, perhaps
much better results.
personal expenses
rapidly at the time,
the publishers that



Sairey Gamp and Betsey Prig

thinking whereof he walked about the black streets of London, fifteen and twenty miles many a night when all the sober folks had gone to bed. Its success is most prodigious. And by every post all



manner of strangers write all manner of letters to him about their homes and hearths, and how this same Carol is read aloud there, and kept on a little shelf by itself. Indeed, it is the greatest success, as I am told, that this ruffian and rascal has ever achieved."

"To keep the Chuzzlewit going, and do this little book, the Carol, in the odd times between two parts of it, was, as you may suppose, pretty tight work," he also explained in the same letter. "But when it was done I broke out like a madman. And if you could have seen me at a children's party at Macready's the other night, going down a country dance with Mrs. M., you would have thought I was a country gentleman of independent property, residing on a tiptop farm, with the wind blowing straight in my face every day. . . ."

In 1844 Dickens went to Italy for a complete rest and change of scene, and here he stayed a year, in comparative idleness, if such a thing were possible with Dickens!

Here he wrote *The Chimes* and made a special hurried visit to London in order to read it to a select circle of friends on December 2nd, just before publication. The circle included Carlyle, Fox, Douglas Jerrold, Maclise and Forster. The read-

ing took place in Forster's house in Lincoln's Inn Fields. The house was immortalised later in *Bleak House* as the house of Mr. Tulkinghorn.

His Christmas story for 1845 was *The Cricket on the Hearth*, the sale of which doubled that of its predecessors. The autumn of that year witnessed the commencement of a long course of amateur play



acting, with Mark Lemon, the Editor of "Punch," John Leech, Douglas Jerrold, Frank Stone and other distinguished literary and artistic men, for the benefit of charity, of which special mention is made elsewhere. In the following January Dickens started the "Daily News," of which he was the first editor; but he was temperamentally unfitted for such a post, and finding it uncongenial, he was succeeded after three weeks only by his friend, John Forster.

His next long story was *Dombey and Son* (1846), to write which he again went abroad, spending a whole year in Lausanne, Genoa and Paris, "to forget everything else if I can, and by living in Switzerland for the summer and in Italy and France for the winter, I shall be saving money while I write."

Although a desire for a constant change of scene, air and surroundings seemed now to be an essential part of his strenuous life—he was not yet thirty-five years of age—he experienced difficulty in settling down to write in new surroundings, and until his pens and ink and the little bronze figures, which always stood upon his desk, arrived in their special box from London, he was not able to make a beginning with his more important work. In these sojourns in the quietude of Genoa or Lausanne, he missed the varied panorama of the London streets, and the long night walks he had always been accustomed to take while in the throes of a new composition. This, he explained, produced an "extraordinary nervousness it was hardly possible to describe" . . . For a week or a fortnight I can write prodigiously in a retired place (as at Broadstairs), and a day in London sets me up again and starts me. But the toil and labour of writing day after day, without the magic lantern, is *immense*!!

Once the difficulties of his new surroundings were overcome, he was able to settle down with all his old enthusiasm. "Invention, thank God," he wrote on one occasion, "seems the easiest thing in the world; and I seem to have such a preposterous idea of the ridiculous as to be constantly requiring to restrain myself from launching into extravagancies in the height of my enjoyment."

Again a Christmas book, *The Battle of Life*, was written cheek and





Paul Dombey and his sister

jowl with a long story, but the strain was very great. "I made a tremendous day's work of it yesterday," he says in one of his letters, "and was horribly excited—so am going to rush out, as fast as I can; being a little used up, and sick."

There had been no long story from Dickens for two years, and the re-appearance of the monthly green publication received an enormous welcome. The sale of *Dombey and Son* broke all previous records, and there was no sign of any lessening in the powers of the writer of *The Pickwick Papers* or of *The Old Curiosity Shop*.

The death of Paul Dombey in the fifth part had just such another effect on the author and on the public as the death of Little Nell had had a few years before. He wrote the account in Paris, and wandered the streets the night through, sad and disconsolate. To quote the special preface, written some ten years later: "When I am reminded by any chance of what it was the waves were saying, I wander in my fancy for a whole winter night about the streets of Paris—as I really did, with a heavy heart, on the night when my little friend and I parted company for ever."

Dickens had the highest possible opinion of *Dombey and Son*. "I am not sorry I cannot bring myself to care much for what opinions people may form," he wrote to Forster; "and I have a strong belief that, if any of my books are read years hence, *Dombey* will be remembered as among the best of them."

Thackeray was delighted with *Dombey and Son*, and often spoke of it in the most glowing terms. When he read the affecting account of the child's death, he seemed electrified at the thought that there was one man living who could exercise so complete a control over him. Cramming Part 5 of the book into his pocket, he rushed round to the printing office of "Punch," and, entering the editor's



Edith Dombey and Mr. Dombey



Mr. Micawber makes Punch

By Fred Barnard



Photo by]

[Walter Dexter

Blundeston Rectory

The original of Blunderstone Rookery,
where David Copperfield was born.

room, he dashed it on the table and exclaimed : " There's no writing against such power as this, one has no chance ! Read that chapter describing young Paul's death ; it is unsurpassed, it is stupendous ! "

Dombey and Son was not entirely written abroad. The early summer of 1847 was spent at Brighton—where Little Paul had died a few months before—and the occasion of his being in England enabled him to gather together again his company of amateur actors to act in London, Manchester and Liverpool for the purpose of augmenting a fund to assist Leigh Hunt and John Poole. Then followed meetings in Leeds and Glasgow to support Men's Institutions, at each of which he presided and delivered—as he had done on other similar occasions—inspiring addresses on the subject of the betterment of the working classes, which have since been published in a volume of *Speeches*.

The Haunted Man was written at Broadstairs in the autumn of 1848, more plays having been acted in the meanwhile in various provincial towns for the endowment of Shakespeare's birthplace—and then came *David Copperfield* (1849), written—for a change, and at the suggestion of his friend Forster—in the first person. Forster little thought then how much of the early part of the story, at least, was actually autobiographical.

To get " local colour," a journey was made into Norfolk to visit Yarmouth. The name of Blundeston he saw upon a signpost—so he informed a friend—and took it " for the sound of its name " for David's birthplace, altering it to Blunderstone—which was far more expressive.

" Of all my books, I like this the best. It will easily be believed that I am a fond parent of every child of my fancy, and no one can ever love that family as dearly as I love them. But, like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child, and his name is David Copperfield."

There is no doubt that *David Copperfield* brought Dickens to the height of his fame. Its appeal to readers lies in the personal elements which go to the making of the story. " I seem to be sending some part of myself into the shadowy world," he wrote to Forster at the time, although the public



David and Little Em'ly

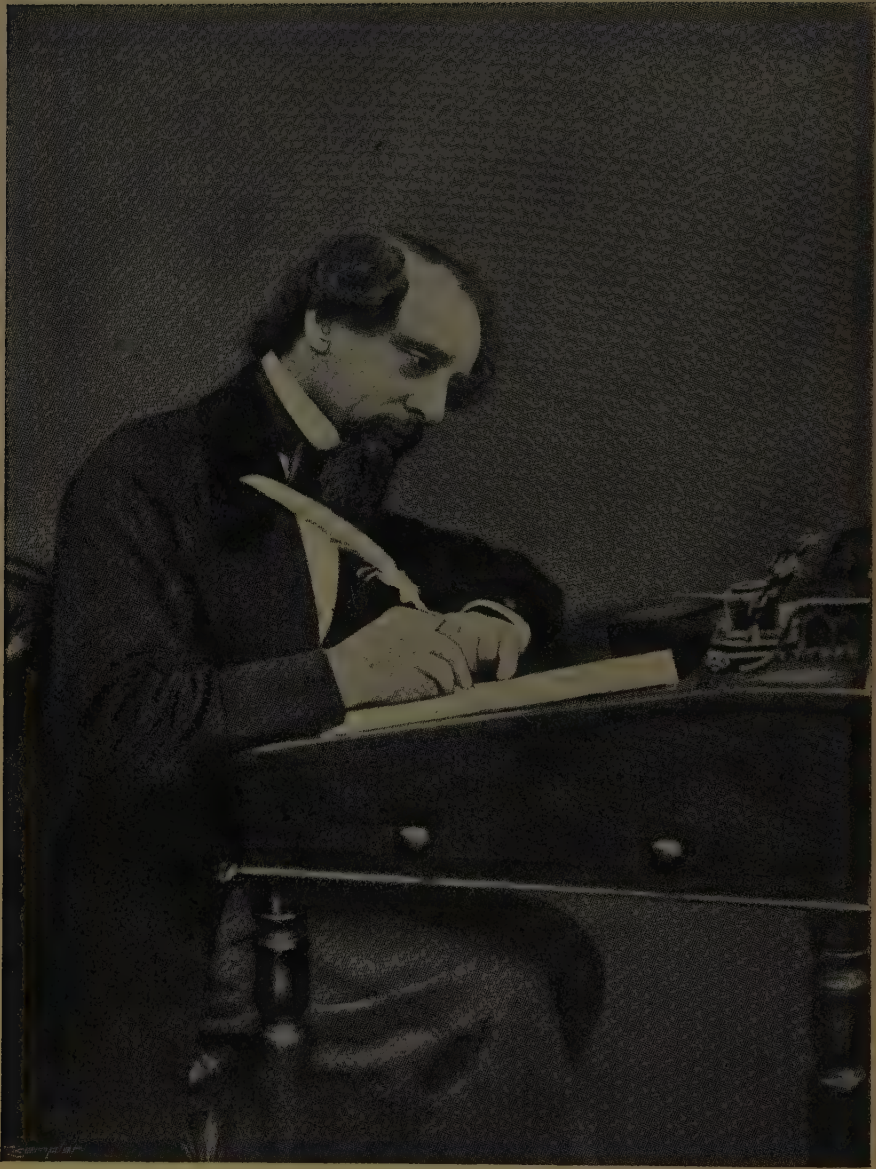
then were not even suspicious of it. But apart from this, it is a great and a lovable book.

During the summer at Bonchurch, in the Isle of Wight, the old notion of a periodical, which had been agitating Dickens's mind for a long time, took definite form. The first title selected for it was "The Shadow," then came "The Robin," "Mankind," "The Household Voice," and finally, "Household Words." The first number appeared on the 30th March, 1850. Dickens gathered round him a brilliant circle of contributors, Mrs. Gaskell being of their number; W. H. Wills was the assistant editor, and the periodical continued until 1858, when, owing to an unfortunate breach with his publishers, it was replaced by a similar publication entitled "All the Year Round," which appeared until his death.

Dickens's contributions to "Household Words" included *A Child's History of England*, and, in conjunction with Wilkie Collins, *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices*; but only one of his shorter novels appeared in this publication. This was *Hard Times*, in 1854. A feature of the new journal was the Christmas Number, issued each December, containing a special story, the main portion of which was by Dickens: the rest by other writers.

On the conclusion of *David Copperfield*, Dickens threw himself into further theatrical adventures: first at Lord Lytton's seat at Knebworth, then at Rockingham Castle, the home of his friends the Watsons, whom he had met in Switzerland. Following these came the series in aid of the Guild of Literature and Art, which had such a magnificent send off at Devonshire House before Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort. In the midst of all this hard work and revelry came great domestic anxieties. Both Mrs. Dickens and the youngest daughter, Dora, were seriously ill, and the mother was ordered away to the purer air of Malvern; between here and London Dickens was constantly travelling. His father died at the end of March, and shortly afterwards Dickens had to fulfil a promise made some time before to take the chair at a dinner in aid of the General Theatrical Fund, which greatly needed help, and was relying on the popularity and engaging oratory of Dickens to make the necessary appeal. He came to town specially from Malvern, and played with his little daughter, much better as was thought, just before he left for the dinner. His speech was a very powerful appeal for help in grateful recognition of the art of the actor, who "has sometimes to come from scenes of sickness, of suffering, ay, of death itself, to play his part before us." And he added "all of us, in our spheres, have as often to do violence to our feelings, and to hide our hearts in





Dickens at his desk

fighting this great battle of life, and in discharging our duties and responsibilities."

He spoke from his heart, little thinking that even then a messenger was waiting in the hall, kept back by Forster until the speech had ended, to inform him that his little girl had died in convulsions a few hours after he had parted from her.

A growing family—he now had six sons and two daughters—again made a large house imperative, and accordingly in 1851 he purchased from his friend, Frank Stone, A.R.A., Tavistock House in Tavistock Square, which was his home for the next eight years. Here he commenced on his new story, *Bleak House*, in which he assailed the prodigious waste of money caused by the law's delays in the Chancery Court, the case of *Jarndyce v. Jarndyce* becoming much more famous than the actual *Jennens* suit which had suggested it. Great as had been the success of the two previous stories, the sale of *Bleak House* was half as large again as *David Copperfield*.

Dean Ramsay's opinion of *Bleak House* is shared by most readers of that book. "What a triumph is Jo! Uncultured nature is *there* indeed; the intimations of true heart feeling, the glimmerings of higher feeling . . . nothing in the field of fiction is to be found in English literature surpassing the death of Jo."

Dickens was now in his fortieth year, and with his theatrical activities, his "Household Words" duties and a new story, was undoubtedly attempting too much. A severe inflammation of the side, a malady dating back to childhood it may be said, was causing him much suffering. This, coupled with the mental strain of his work, made him consider the advisability of seeking rest in a foreign country once more; but instead of an immediate move abroad, he spent three months at Dover (1852), and then in the late autumn went to Boulogne, where he also passed the summers of the next two years, and of 1856.

During the next few years a greater restlessness than usual came over Dickens, which even the excitement of so varied a life as he was living failed to dispel. To those activities already



Lady Dedlock and Poor Jo

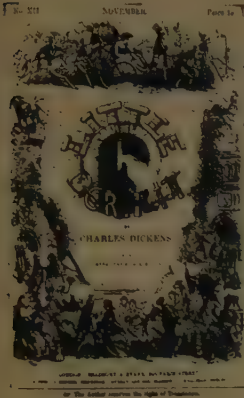
mentioned were added public readings from his works for the benefit of charities, and the construction of a miniature theatre in the drawing room of Tavistock House. Part of the time was spent in Folkestone, part in Paris, part in Boulogne. During 1855 and 1856 was written and published *Little Dorrit*, containing a satire on Government Departments, termed "Circumlocution," and the science of "How not to do it." Again in this book we find many personal associations in the chapters dealing with the Marshalsea Prison, and with the character of Arthur Clennam, which is David Copperfield at forty.



Little Dorrit in her Marshalsea garret

An example of how Dickens shaped his stories as he went along and seldom started them with definitely fixed ideas is shown by the following extract from a letter to Forster while he was at work on this book: "I am just getting to work on Number three; sometimes enthusiastic, more often dull enough. There is an enormous outlay in the Father of the Marshalsea chapter, in the way of getting a great lot of matter into a small space. I am not quite resolved, but I have a great idea of overwhelming that family with wealth. Their condition would be very curious; I can make Dorrit very strong in the story, I hope."

In March, 1856, he purchased the house of his dreams, Gads Hill



restlessness attributable, a view to for the cost of had for some arranging for public read-special refer-elsewhere. To devoted the his activities siderable por-ensuing year. Round" had in succession hold Words," the new pub-first number 1859) opened with a new story, *A Tale of Two Cities*.

This was Dickens's second historical novel, and with the exception probably of *The Pickwick Papers*, it is the widest known of all his works, due in no small measure to the great success of Sir John Martin Harvey in the character of Sydney Carton in a dramatic version entitled "The Only Way," which he has played for over thirty years.

Before proceeding further with the story of Dickens as a novelist, we will now deal with him as an amateur Actor and as a Reader.

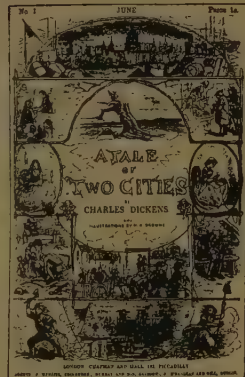
Place, near Rochester, and the repairs and improvements to the house, before he was able to occupy it permanently, engaged his attention for the best part of two years. By the time he came to live there a great change had come over his life. By a mutual agreement Mrs. Dickens henceforth lived apart from her husband, taking the eldest son with her; the remainder of the children went with the father, the eldest daughter acting as housekeeper.

To divert his mind from these domestic troubles, which his friends had for some time seen

approaching a climax, and to which his was doubtless and also with helping to pay Gads Hill, he time past been a series of ings, to which ence is made these he now greater part of during a con-tion of each "All the Year been launched to "House-and to assist lication, the (30th April,



Dr. Manette in the Bastille



the stage, and were productive of certain tragedies "achieved at the mature age of eight or ten, and represented with great applause to overflowing nurseries," as he himself once put it.

Misnar, the Sultan of India, was the title of one such play, no doubt very freely adapted from one of his favourite books, *Tales of the Genii*, but only the name has survived.

Another early play was *The Stratagems of Rozanza*, probably written at the age of nineteen. The work is not in his own handwriting, but was copied out by his mother: the name of the author is given as C. J. H. Dickens (his full initials, never used on any other occasion). It appears to be rather a free adaptation of one of Goldoni's plays, and we can well understand the desire of Dickens, in later life, that such effusions should be destroyed. He was, not unnaturally, extremely anxious that none of this early "rubbish," as he called it, should get into the hands of the public.

It was this passion for the stage that not only led him to write plays at an early age, and to act in them, but to take a keen interest in all things theatrical throughout his whole life. Indeed, it might be said that it was of the theatre that Dickens's great creations were born; that he saw life somewhat through the haze of the footlights. That Dickens created his characters first as an actor is supported by what he tells us in prefaces to several of the books, notably in *David Copperfield*, where he writes of having dismissed into the shadowy world a part of himself in concluding "a two years' imaginative task." The theatre was undoubtedly the abiding passion of Dickens's life; he was certainly one of the most brilliant amateur actors who ever trod the boards, and to the end of his life his day-dream was to be the manager of a great theatre. It is fortunate for us, however, that his talents were diverted to the written, rather than to the spoken word; but this was entirely due to an accident.

During the dull round of his early reporting days—when time often hung heavily on his hands—he confesses to have been to a theatre every night, with a very few exceptions, for quite three years,

displaying a keen discrimination in the choice of play — choosing the pieces where the acting was best, and never missing a play in which that excellent comedian Mathews appeared. On him he modelled himself. "I practised immensely," he says, "even such



things as walking in and out, and sitting down in a chair; often four, five, six hours a day: shut up in my own room, or walking about in the fields." In this way he learned a great number of parts. When he was about twenty, and knew most of Mathews's "At Home" by heart, he wrote to the stage manager at Covent Garden offering himself for a part, stating how he believed he had a "strong perception of character

This Page is from an unpublished Travesty written by Mr Charles Dickens for private performance in his own family (1834) and is in his own handwriting. The Great Unpaid "read" from himself to himself

O' Thello

*John Dickens
Edinburgh
Jan 1834*

(Part of The Great Unpaid)

Act 1 = Scene 2

Discovered at table on opening of scene

Gl Begin the business

What business and says "Dum! Confusion!"

Gr What charge can warrant such a proposition?

Brab — Warrant

Gl You're not warranted

In making noise enough to wake the dead
Tell us (just having made a proper bow)
What is the meaning of this precious court.

Brab — stolen my daughter

Gr Who has done this?

Brab — O' Thello

Gr Cull the man in

(Music: wait till he comes in & music stops)

And now common silence

What can you say for your own defence?
if Haydn's 9th I do

Facsimile of page of manuscript of a travesty, "O' Thello" written by Dickens at the age of twenty-one for private performance in his own family; authenticated by his father

and oddity," and a natural power of reproducing in his own person what he observed in others. The result of this was that he received an appointment to appear before Charles Kemble and do any scene of Mathews's he pleased. But when the day came he was "laid up with a terrible bad cold and an inflammation of the face"; the opportunity was lost, and English literature was the gainer thereby. Although he was given the opportunity of a further hearing at a later date, he did not avail himself of it, as he shortly afterwards obtained

advancement in the journalistic world, and began to write stories and achieve a success in them which turned his thoughts away from the stage for a while.

In 1833 he wrote a travesty entitled *O'Thello*: a few pages of one of the parts are still in existence signed, by John Dickens (the father) in June, 1842, as "an unpublished travesty written by Mr. Charles Dickens for private performance in his own family (1833), and is in his own handwriting." (See facsimile on p. 56.)

The play was a burlesque, with music, and doubtless particularly suited to the comic singing capabilities of the author. The part referred to that of "The Great Unpaid," was taken by John Dickens himself.

Pickwick had not been appearing for more than six months when

Dickens wrote "a comic burletta" for John Pritt Harley. It was called *The Strange Gentleman*, and was produced at the St. James's Theatre. It ran until December, when it was replaced by an "operatic burletta," also by Dickens, entitled *The Village Coquettes*, for which John Hullah, a popular composer of the day, wrote the music. Although Dickens had a very poor opinion of

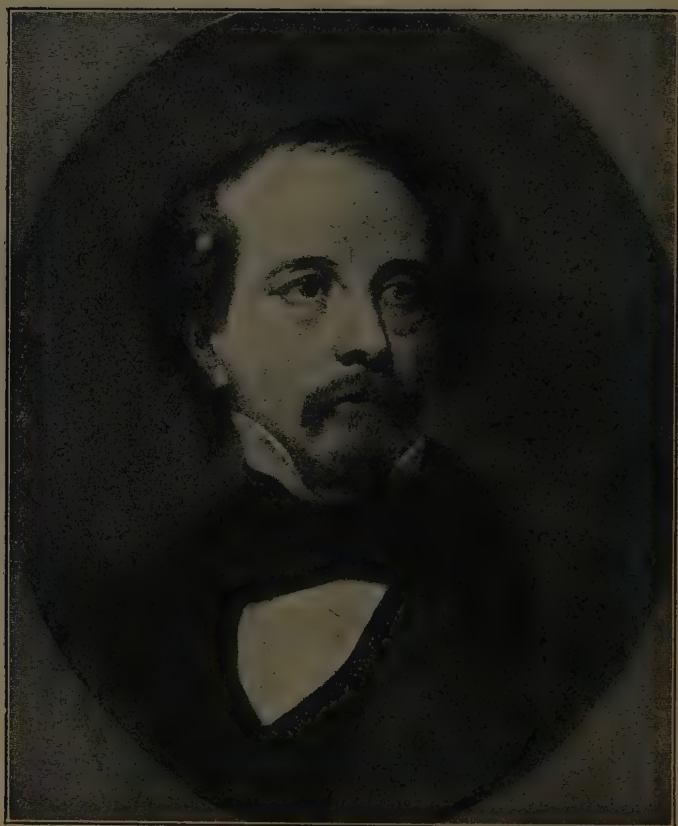


these two works, they met with a fair measure of success. The next "comic burletta" to be produced at the same theatre was also by Dickens, *Is She His Wife? or Something Singular*, and at the same time *The Strange Gentleman* was revived, which certainly points to its success.

The great success of *Pickwick* introduced Dickens to a large number of people, including Macready, with whom sprang up a long and lasting friendship. Early in their acquaintanceship Dickens wrote a play specially for him entitled *The Lamplighter*, but it was never produced. So did the lure of the theatre hold Dickens in the first years of his great success as an author: but it slackened just a little at about this time (Dickens was only 26) owing to the increasing demands on his time; at any rate, his writing was henceforward confined to stories.

Four years later, on his way back from his very successful visit to the United States, he was prevailed upon to act with the officers of the Coldstream Guards in Montreal for the benefit of a charity: and not only did he act, but he took the whole responsibility of the production on his own shoulders—as the following letter to a friend clearly indicates.

"I would give something if you could only stumble into that very dark and dusty theatre in the daytime (at any minute between twelve



Portrait of Dickens, painted in Paris by Ary Scheffer, 1856

Now in the National Portrait Gallery, London



and three), and see me with my coat off, the stage manager and universal director, urging impracticable ladies and impossible gentlemen on to the very confines of insanity, shouting and driving about, in my own person, to an extent which would justify any philanthropic stranger in clapping me into a strait-waistcoat without further inquiry, endeavouring to goad H. into some dim and faint understanding of a prompter's duties, and struggling in such a vortex of noise, dirt, bustle, confusion, and inextricable entanglement of speech and action as you would grow giddy in contemplating. . . . This kind of voluntary hard labour used to be my great delight. The *furor* has come strong upon me again, and I begin to be once more of opinion that nature intended me for the lessee of a national theatre, and that pen, ink, and paper have spoiled a manager."

There was a hint in the correspondence at the time that a repetition of the plays would be given in London; but the idea seems to have slumbered for a couple of years, work and other matters intervening.

In 1844 Dickens spent practically the whole year in Italy; but made a hurried visit to London to read his new Christmas book, *The Chimes*, to a select circle of his friends. The evening before he had read it to his friend, the great actor Macready. Writing to his wife, he said—and with what pride he must have written it!—"If you had seen Macready last night, undisguisedly sobbing and crying on the sofa as I read, you would have felt, as I did, what a thing it is to have power."

Here, then, was the germ of that larger appeal by public reading that Dickens was to embark upon some dozen years later; but in the meantime the impression made upon his friends, especially on such a subject as Macready, and on Carlyle and Stanfield, fanned the flame that was destined to burn brightly on the amateur theatrical stage for the next ten years and more.

The year 1845 saw the first of the long series of plays which Dickens produced first for the amusement of himself and his friends, and then for charity. This was Ben Jonson's "Every Man in his Humour," played at the old Royalty Theatre, with Dickens as the swaggering Captain Bobadil, and Mark Lemon, Douglas Jerrold, John Leech, Frank Stone, John Forster and other distinguished men in the cast.

"He was the life and soul of the entire affair," wrote his biographer, Forster. "I never seemed till then to have known his business capabilities. He took everything on himself, and did the whole of it without an effort. He was stage-director, very often stage-carpenter, scene-arranger, property-man, prompter, and band-master. Without offending anyone he kept every one in order. For all he had useful suggestions, and the dullest of clays under his potter's hand were transformed into little bits





Dickens as Captain Bobadil in "Every Man in His Humour"

From a painting by C. R. Leslie, R.A.

of porcelain. He adjusted scenes, assisted carpenters invented costumes, devised play-bills, wrote out calls, and enforced as well as exhibited in his proper person everything of which he urged the necessity on others."

The performance was strictly private, but such a notable gathering was not to be ignored, and before long the demand arose for a performance in aid of charity, which was accordingly given.

Performances followed in Manchester and Liverpool for the benefit of Leigh Hunt and John Poole.

A year or so later, Dickens organised a fresh series of plays to assist the fund for the purchase of Shakespeare's Birthplace, adding "The Merry Wives of Windsor" to the plays already produced. In this he played Shallow, and at the Haymarket Theatre the play was honoured with the presence of Queen Victoria and Prince Consort.

Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Edinburgh and Glasgow were visited by these "Splendid Strollers," as they were called, nearly three thousand pounds being raised in this way. Amateur theatricals followed in the fine baronial hall of Rockingham Castle (the original of Chesney Wold in *Bleak House*) for his friends the Hon. Richard and Mrs. Watson, and these were repeated at Lord Lytton's seat, Knebworth, and led to the series of performances for the Guild of Literature and Art which Lytton, in conjunction with Dickens, had established to assist the needy in those two professions.



Dickens as Captain Coldstream in "Used Up"

From a painting by Augustus Egg, R.A.

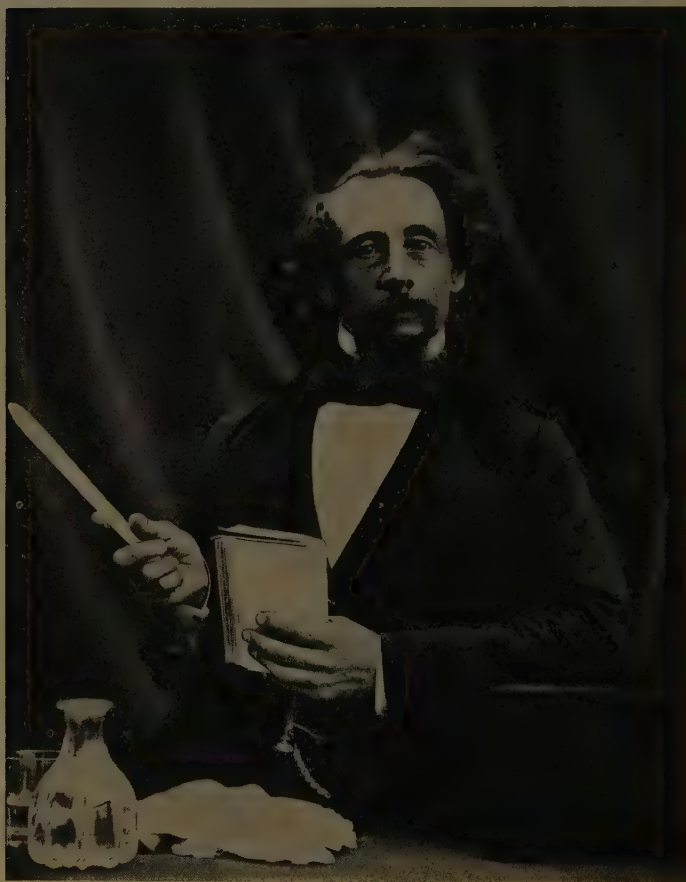
Now in The Dickens House

For this purpose Lytton—the most popular playwright of the day—wrote a special play, "Not So Bad As We Seem," the production of which was in Dickens's hands. This had a remarkable send off at Devonshire House on May 16th, 1851, in the presence of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, the sum of a thousand pounds being realised from the first performance. Visits were subsequently paid to several provincial towns with equally successful results.

The passion for the theatre was further exemplified by the construction of a little theatre in the drawing room of his house in Tavistock Square, where Twelfth Night plays were specially done for the family, augmented by the families of Mark Lemon, Frank Stone and others. The exacting note which characterised Dickens's life is shown by the play bills which were specially printed for these plays. To fairy plays such as "Tom Thumb" and "Fortunio" were added "The Lighthouse" and "The Frozen Deep," both by Wilkie Collins. For the former Clarkson Stanfield, R.A., painted a special drop scene representing the exterior of a lighthouse, which after Dickens's death sold for a thousand guineas. "The Frozen Deep" was played in several towns for the benefit of the fund for

the widow of Douglas Jerrold, and in this way two thousand pounds was realised. Queen Victoria, who had a great admiration for Dickens, both as a writer and an actor, being unable to attend any of the public performances, a private representation was arranged for her specially at the Hanover Square Rooms.

This play marked Dickens's last appearance as an actor. From 1858 onwards public readings from his own works gave him wider scope for more intimate appearance before his vast appreciative public, and utilising the great talents of mimicry of which he was so abundantly possessed.



Dickens giving a reading of his own works

V.

Dickens as a Reader

DICKENS'S popularity as a writer was considerably enhanced by his success as a reader of his own works. At first these readings were given for charity and hundreds of

pounds were thus realised for benevolent objects in different parts of the country. They originated in this manner.

In the January of 1853 Dickens, who was always in great demand as an after-dinner speaker, was invited to attend a "Banquet in honour of Literature and Art" in Birmingham, at which he replied to the toast of "The Literature of England." Later in the evening he proposed the toast "The Educational Institutions of Birmingham." Prior to the Banquet, Dickens was the recipient, at the rooms of the Society of Arts, of a salver, and a diamond ring, "as a sincere testimony of their appreciation of his varied literary acquirements, and of the genial philosophy and high moral teaching which characterise his writings."

After the banquet he made the offer to give his first public reading in aid of the funds for the building of the Birmingham and Midland Institute.

In a letter confirming this offer he wrote: "There would be some novelty in the thing, as I have never done it in public, though I have in private, and (if I may say so) with a great effect on the hearers."

Accordingly, the following December Dickens read in the Town Hall *A Christmas Carol* on the 27th, and *The Cricket on the Hearth* on the 29th. The enthusiasm was great, and he consented to read the *Carol* a second time, on the 30th, "if seats were reserved for working men at prices within their means."

To a correspondent he wrote of this occasion: "I was heartily pleased with the Birmingham audience, which was a very fine one. I never saw, nor do I suppose anybody ever did, such an interesting sight as the working people's night. There were two thousand five hundred of them there, and a more delicately observant audience it is impossible to imagine. They lost nothing, misinterpreted nothing, followed everything closely, laughed and cried with most delightful correctness, and animated



Pecksniff

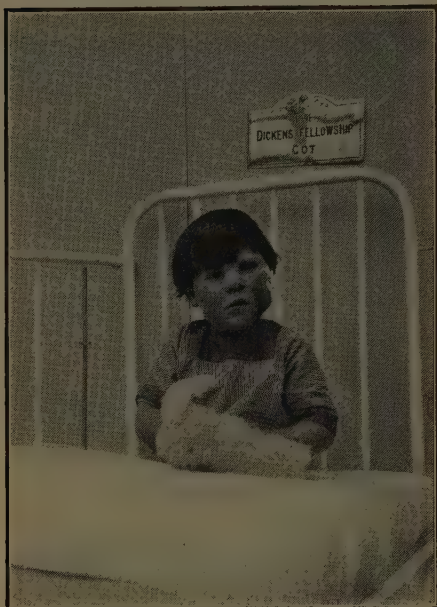


The Artful Dodger

me to that extent that I felt as if we were all bodily going up into the clouds together." The result of these readings was an addition of between four and five hundred pounds to the funds for the establishment of the new Institute; and a prettily worked flower-basket in silver, presented to Mrs. Dickens, commemorated these first public readings "to nearly six thousand people."

Other readings on behalf of Mechanics' and Literary Institutions in Reading, Sherborne, Bradford, Folkestone, Sheffield, Peterborough, Manchester, Coventry, Bristol, Edinburgh and Chatham, followed at various intervals throughout the next four years, during which time he was also acting in old English comedies with his friends of the Guild of Literature and Art.

All this time there had been a growing desire on the part of Dickens to see more of the public, who were testifying in various ways their appreciation of his writings, and to appear before them as a public reader for his own pecuniary gain, and his final decision was made after a most successful reading of *A Christmas Carol* in London. This was in 1858. Dickens accepted an invitation to take the chair at a public dinner in aid of the funds of the Chil-



In the Dickens Fellowship Cot at Alton Hospital for Crippled Children

dren's Hospital in Great Ormond Street, which had been doing a deal of useful work, over 50,000 children having been attended to in four or five years, and of these no less than 30,000 were under five years of age. Dickens threw himself heart and soul into the service, and his address from the chair had a startling effect upon the audience. "Many a poor child sick and neglected I have seen in London; many have I also seen most affectionately tended, in unwholesome houses and hard circumstances where recovery was impossible: and the child has always addressed his dumb wonder to me what it meant, and why, in the name of a gracious God, such things should be! . . . But, ladies and gentlemen," Dickens added, "such things need not be, and will not be, if this company, which is a drop of the life-blood of the great compassionate public heart, will only accept the means of rescue and prevention, which it is mine to offer."

He then went on to describe the family mansion which had been turned into a hospital for sick children. "On the walls of these rooms are graceful, pleasant, bright, childish pictures. At the beds' heads hang representations of the Figure which is the universal embodiment of all mercy and compassion, the figure of Him who was once a child Himself, and a poor one. But, alas! reckoning up the number of beds that are there, the visitor to the child's hospital will find himself perforce obliged to stop at very little over thirty: and will learn, with sorrow and surprise, that even that small number, so forlornly, so miserably diminutive compared with this vast London, cannot possibly be maintained unless the hospital be made better known. I content myself with saying better known, because I will not believe that in a Christian community of fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters, it can fail being better known to be well and richly endowed."

It was a brave and true prediction. That night alone added more than three thousand pounds to its funds, and shortly afterwards Dickens put the crown to his good work by reading, on its behalf, *A Christmas Carol*. The sum then realised, and the urgent demand that followed for a repetition, made Dickens decide to give such readings for his own benefit, and for several years afterwards he toured England, Scotland, Ireland and the United States, reading from his own works. This added fresh laurels to his crown: but, alas! it was the wear and tear of these readings that eventually cost him his life.

As an example of contemporary opinion on Dickens's readings we quote the following entry from the diary of Sir Frederick Pollock:—"To reading by Dickens at St. James's Hall. He gave 'Boots at the Holly Tree,' the scene between Bill Sikes and Nancy, and a bit of Mrs. Gamp. What an actor he would have made! What a success he must have had if he had gone to the bar! His power of reproducing a scene and bringing to the very eyes of his audience its exact features and the relative bearings of its composing parts has never been equalled. This would have been an invaluable quality in many cases at the bar. He could always at a glance take in the contents and furniture of a room, and in this way was able to astonish his friends by performing some of the feats made famous by Houdin the conjurer. In the scene on the steps of London Bridge from *Oliver Twist*, the



David and Mr. Peggotty



Mrs. Gamp



Mr. & Mrs. Dombey

MR.

CHARLES DICKENS

WILL READ AT THE

FESTIVAL CONCERT ROOM,

YORK,

ON

MONDAY EVENING,

OCTOBER 25th, at 8 o'Clock,

THE POOR TRAVELLER,

BOOTS AT THE HOLLY TREE INN,

AND

MRS. CAMP.

PLACES FOR THE READING:-

Stalls, (numbered and reserved)	-	Four Shillings.
Gallery, " " "	-	Two Shillings.
Back Seats, " " "	-	One Shilling.

Tickets to be had of Mr. HENRY BANKS, Music Warehouse, Stonegate, York,

Where a Plan of the Reserved Seats may be seen.

NOTE On only one occasion, within Mr. DICKENS's experience, some ladies and gentlemen in the Stalls caused great inconvenience and confusion (no doubt, unintentionally), by leaving their places during the last quarter of an hour of the Reading, when the general attention could least bear to be disturbed. This elicited a strong disposition in other parts of the Hall towards an angry but not unreasonable protest.

In case any portion of the company should be under the necessity of leaving before the close of the Reading in the apprehension of losing railway trains, they are respectfully intreated, as an act of consideration and courtesy towards the remainder, to avail themselves of the opportunity afforded by the interval between the parts when Mr. DICKENS retires for five minutes.

THE READING WILL LAST TWO HOURS.

"Penny Home Press," 60, St. Martin's Lane.

Copy of Poster announcing a reading by Dickens



whole arrangement of the locality, and the positions of the speakers and listeners, stood out in a kind of reality when accentuated by the voice and gestures of Dickens."

Carlyle gave his opinion of Dickens as a reader in these words:—"Dickens does do it capitally, such as it is: acts better than any Macready in the world; a whole tragic, comic, heroic theatre visible performing under a hat, and keeping us laughing the whole night."

From Dickens's own letters we obtain a full account of the great personal affection with which the popular writer was greeted by the public. "The run upon the tickets here is so immense," he wrote from Sheffield, "that Arthur (his manager) is obliged to get bills out, signifying that no more can be sold. It will be by no means easy to get into the place the numbers who have already paid. It is the hall we acted in, crammed to the roof and the passages."

"The Hull people (not generally considered excitable, even on their own showing) were so enthusiastic, that we were obliged to promise to go back there for two readings. Arthur told you, I suppose, that he had his shirt front and waistcoat torn off last night? He was perfectly enraptured in consequence. Our men got so knocked about that he gave them five shillings a piece on the spot. John passed several minutes upside down against a wall, with his head amongst the people's boots. He came out of the difficulty in an exceedingly tousled condition, and with his face much flushed. For all this, and their being packed as you may conceive they would be packed, they settled down the instant I went in, and never wavered in the closest attention for an instant."

"The readings have made an immense effect in this place (Newcastle), and it is remarkable that, although the people are individually rough, collectively they are an unusually tender and sympathetic audience; while their comic perception is quite up to the high London standard."

From Brighton he wrote:—"I had a most charming audience for *Copperfield*, with a delicacy of perception that really made the work delightful. It is very pretty to see the girls and women generally, in the matter of Dora; and everywhere I have found that peculiar personal relation between my audience and myself on which I counted most when I entered on this enterprise."

"The reception at Cambridge was something to be proud of in such a place. The colleges mustered in full force, from the biggest guns to the smallest; and went beyond even Manchester in the roars of welcome and rounds of cheers. The place was crammed, and all

through the reading everything was taken with the utmost heartiness of enjoyment."

Of another visit to the same city he wrote:—"We had a splendid rush last night. . . . They were a far finer audience than the previous night. I think the finest I have ever read to. They took every word of the *Dombey* in quite an amazing manner, and after the child's death, paused a little, then set up a shout that it did one good to hear. Mrs. Gamp then set in with a roar, which lasted till I had done. I think everybody for the time forgot everything but the matter in hand. It was as fine an instance of thorough absorption in a fiction as any of us are likely to see ever again."

The readings were not without their adventures, and what came near being a terrible catastrophe was averted by Dickens's coolness and presence of mind. It was at Newcastle, and the incident was recorded by Dickens in these words:—"The room was tremendously crowded and my gas-apparatus fell down. There was a terrible wave among the people for an instant, and God knows what destruction of life a rush to the stairs would have caused. Fortunately a lady in the front of the stalls ran out towards me, exactly in a place where I knew that the whole hall could see her. So I addressed her, laughing, and half-asked and half-ordered her to sit down again; and, in a moment, it was all over. But the men in attendance had such a fearful sense of what might have happened (besides the real danger of fire) that they positively shook the boards I stood on, with their trembling, when they came up to put things right. I am proud to record that the gas-man's sentiment, as delivered afterwards, was, 'The more you want of the master, the more you'll find in him.' With which complimentary homage, and with the wind blowing so that can I hardly hear myself write, I conclude."

An accident of an entirely different, and happier character, was that which Dickens referred to as follows:—"We had a tremendous hall at Birmingham last night, £230 odd, 2100 people; and I made a most ridiculous mistake. Had *Nickleby* on my list to finish with, instead of *Trial*. Read *Nickleby* with great go, and the people remained. Went back again at 10 o'clock, and explained the accident; but said if they liked I would give them the *Trial*. They did like;—and I had another half hour of it in that enormous place."

One or two other incidents are worth recording to show the close attachment between author and public that were the result of these readings.

The following has reference to a reading at Leamington:—"There



was one gentleman at the Little Dombey yesterday who exhibited—or rather concealed—the profoundest grief. After crying a good deal without hiding it, he covered his face with both his hands and laid it down on the back of the seat before him, and really shook with emotion. He was not in mourning, but I supposed him to have lost some child in old time. . . . There was a remarkably good fellow, too,

of thirty or something so in Toots that compose him—laughed until his eyes with chief; and felt Toots he began to wipe his eyes when Toots more, he gave as if it were for him. It monly droll, me laugh

A tour in States result—manifesta—home, and can quately dealt rate article.

A visit to 1858 was pro—most unusual scenes. “In Dublin there was almost a riot. People broke the pay box and freely offered £5 for a stall. In Belfast he had enormous audiences, being compelled, he said, to turn half the town away. The reading over, the people ran after him to look. ‘Do me the honour,’ said one, ‘to shake hands, Misther Dickens, and God bless you, sir, not ounly for the light you’ve been to me this night, but for the light you’ve been in ma house, sir (and God love your face !), this many a year.’ Men cried undisguisedly. And on the other hand, he wrote in a letter home, ‘as to the “Boots” and “Mrs. Gamp” it was just one roar with me and them. For they made me laugh so that sometime I could not compose my face to go on.’ ”

On another occasion, after a reading, he was accosted in the street with “Mr. Dickens, will you let me touch the hand that has filled my house with many friends?”

How many hundreds of thousands of us have been so served; how many hundreds of thousands of houses has he filled with his many friends.



Paul Dombey

so, who found very ludicrous he *could not* self at all, but he sat wiping his handker—whenever he coming again, laugh and afresh; and came once a kind of cry, too much was uncom—and made heartily.”

the United ed in the same tions as at only be ade—with in a sepa—

Ireland in ductive of al—

VI.

The Last Years



IN 1860 Dickens took up permanent residence at Gads Hill Place, near Rochester, which for the past two years had been a summer residence only. This new life as the master of a country estate appealed to him immensely. If ever there was a House of Dreams, that house was Gads Hill Place. When a boy at Chatham, this house was, to use his own words, "literally a dream of my childhood."

"When I was a small boy down in these parts," he wrote to his French friend, de Cerjat, "I thought it the most beautiful house ever seen. And my poor father used to bring me to look at it and used to say that if ever I grew up to be a clever man perhaps I might own that house . . . in remembrance of which I have always in passing looked to see if it was to be sold or let, and it has never been to me like any other house, and it has never changed at all."

Dickens made many additions and alterations to the house, and improvements were constantly engaging his attention during the remainder of his life. He had a great liking for anything that was bright and cheerful, and had the drawing room hung with mirrors to reflect the light from all possible angles: his last addition was a conservatory connecting the drawing room with the dining room.

Gads Hill Place is now a school for girls, but few, if any, alterations have been made in the house itself. The library, with the dummy bookcase covering the inside of the door, is still as it was. Some of the book titles are most amusing, such as "Lady Godiva on the Horse," "Noah's Architecture," "Cats' Lives" (in nine volumes), "The History of a Short Chancery Suit" (21 volumes).

On the opposite side of the road to the house is a shrubbery called the Wilderness. Dickens by means of an under-accessible from the main road, a gift from his the members of his house for many hours fitting the

"It will really be a charming study." Later room is up among the and the birds, and the out, and the green



The Chalet

ens purchased this, and ground passage made it grounds. Here he erected which arrived one Christ-actor friend Fechter, and party busied themselves various pieces together. pretty thing," he wrote, upper room will make a on he again wrote: "My branches of the trees butterflies fly in and branches shoot in at the

open windows, and the lights and the shadows of the clouds come and go with the rest of the company. The scent of the flowers, and, indeed, of everything that is growing for miles and miles, is most delicious."

As we should imagine, many a happy Christmas did Dickens spend at Gads Hill surrounded by his large family. He was famous for games of all sorts, especially Proverbs and Dumb Crambo, the latter giving him full scope for his imitative ability. At dinner the lighted pudding with sprig of holly was never absent, and the invariable toast was "Here's to us all. God bless us." Those around him were not forgotten, the villagers on more than one occasion being called in to be the audience at Charades in which the whole family took part.

Then there were the sports, regularly held by "Squire" Dickens; and according to a letter which he found time to write one Christmas Day: "Foot races for the villagers come off in my field to-morrow. We have been all hard at work all day building a course and making countless flags, and I don't know what else. Layard is chief commissioner of the domestic police. The country police predict an immense crowd."

One of the first great happenings at Gads Hill was the wedding of his second daughter, Kate, to Charles Collins, brother of Wilkie Collins, the novelist. Of the rest of the family, to quote from a letter which Dickens wrote at this time to a friend abroad:—

"My eldest daughter has not yet started any conveyance on the road to matrimony (that I know of); but it is likely enough that she will, as she is very agreeable and intelligent. They are both very pretty. My eldest boy, Charley, has been in Barings' house for three or four years, and is now going to Hong Kong, strongly backed up by Barings, to buy tea on his own account, as a means of forming a connection and seeing more of the practical part of a merchant's calling, before starting in London for himself.

His brother Frank (Jeffrey's godson) I have just recalled from France and Germany, to come and learn business, and qualify himself to join his brother on his return from the Celestial Empire. The next boy, Sydney Smith, is designed for the navy, and is in training at Portsmouth, awaiting his nomination. He is about three foot high, with the biggest eyes ever seen, and is known in the Portsmouth parts as "Young Dickens, who can do everything."

"Another boy is at school in France; the youngest of all has a private tutor at home. I have forgotten the second in order, who is in India. He went out as



Dick Swiveller and Fred Trent



Dickens reading to his daughters
in the grounds of Gads Hill

an ensign of a non-existent native regiment, got attached to the 42nd Highlanders, one of the finest regiments on the Queen's service; has remained with them ever since, and got made a lieutenant by the chances of the rebellious campaign before he was eighteen. Miss Hogarth, always Miss Hogarth, is the guide, philosopher, and friend of all the party, and a very close affection exists between her and the girls. I doubt if she will ever marry. I don't know whether to be glad of it or sorry for it."

Two of the children still survive, Kate, the daughter, who was married from Gads Hill—now Mrs. Perugini, and Sir Henry Fielding Dickens, Common Serjeant of the City of London, to whom Dickens wrote some years later when his son was an undergraduate at Cambridge:

"I am very glad to hear of the success of your reading, and still more glad that you went at it with downright earnest. I should never have made my success in life if I had been shy of taking pains, or if I had not bestowed upon the least thing I have ever undertaken exactly the same attention and care that I have bestowed upon the greatest. Do everything at your best. It was but this last year that I set to and learned every word of my readings; and from ten years ago to last night I have never read to an audience but I have watched for an opportunity of striking out something better somewhere. Look at such of my manuscripts as are in the library at Gads, and think of the patient hours devoted year after year to single lines.

"You know how hard I work for what I get, and I think you know that I never had money help from any human creature after I was a child.

"You know that you are one of many charges on me, and that I trust to your so exercising your abilities and improving the advantages of your past expensive education, as soon to diminish this charge. I say no more on that head.

"Whatever you do, above all things keep out of debt and confide in me. If you ever find yourself on the verge of any perplexity or difficulty, come to me. You will never find me hard with you while you are manly and truthful.

"As your brothers have gone away one by one, I have written to each of them what I am now going to write to you. You know that you have never been hampered with religious forms of restraint, and with mere unmeaning forms I have no sympathy. But I most strongly and affectionately impress upon you the priceless value of the New Testament, and the study of that book as the one unfailing guide in life. Deeply respecting it, and bowing down before the character of our Saviour, as separated from the vain construc-



Arthur Clennam



Minor Canon Row,
Rochester

"And so God bless you.

"Ever your affectionate Father."

In the interval between the first reading tour, which ended in October, 1859, and the commencement of the second tour in April 1861, Dickens was busy on a new story, *Great Expectations*, in which he returned to the style of narrative adopted in *David Copperfield*. There are many other similarities between the two books, especially in the early chapters devoted to the childhood of the hero, Philip Pirrip, otherwise Pip. The principal scene of this story was placed in Rochester and the surrounding marsh country of the River Thames.

The readings in different parts of the country curtailed his literary output to a certain extent, but the *Christmas Stories* were regularly forthcoming as extra numbers of "All the Year Round," and amongst them must not be forgotten *Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings* (1863), *Mrs. Lirriper's Legacy* (1864), *Doctor Marigold's Prescriptions* (1865), *Mugby Junction* (1866), and *No Thoroughfare* (1867).

Then also during this period he played the part of an *Uncommercial Traveller* "in the fancy goods line" in many parts of London, writing his experiences in his weekly magazine and publishing them in volume form in 1861.

After the second series of readings in 1861-2 Dickens resumed the publication of a story in monthly parts, abandoned after *Little Dorrit*, by writing *Our Mutual Friend*. It was while this was in progress and Mr. and Mrs. Boffin were "in their manuscript dress," that Dickens came very near to losing his life. It was on June 9th, 1865 (the very day of his death five years later), that he was a passenger by the French boat train which met with a disastrous accident at Staplehurst, a few miles south of Maidstone, in which several people were killed.

The only carriage which did not fall over the bridge into the stream was the one in which Dickens was travelling. He was able to extricate himself and render valuable aid to the injured, but the shock to his already overstrained system was so great that he never fully recovered from the ordeal. There is a reference to this in the Postscript to

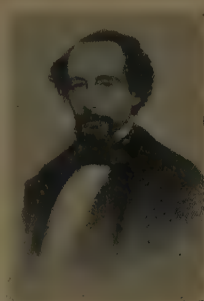
tions and inventions of men, you cannot go very wrong, and will always preserve at heart a true spirit of veneration and humility. Similarly I impress upon you the habit of saying a Christian prayer every night and morning. These things have stood by me all through my life, and remember that I tried to render the New Testament intelligible to you and lovable by you when you were a mere baby.



Restoration House, Rochester



Our Mutual Friend, dated September, 1865, in which he says "I remember with devout thankfulness that I can never be much nearer parting company with my readers for ever, than I was then, until there shall be written against my life the two words with which I have this day closed this book—
The End."



In 1867-8 Dickens paid a second visit to America, and gave readings in the principal towns.

In Boston his reception was beyond all expectations. In New York the speculators assembled the night before the reading in long lines to wait the opening of the doors at nine the next morning for the issue of the tickets. They continued to come all night, and at five o'clock in the morning there were two lines of 800 each, whilst at eight there were 5000. At nine o'clock each of the two lines reached more than three-quarters of a mile in length; members of families were relieving each other, waiters from neighbouring restaurants were serving breakfasts in the open December air, and excited applicants for tickets were offering five or ten dollars for the mere permission to exchange places with other persons standing nearer the head of the line. Thus it will be seen that whatever ill-feeling had existed for a short time after his previous visits, consequent upon the publication of *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*, it had now entirely vanished, and Dickens may well be regarded as one of the finest links in the brotherhood that exists between this country and the United States of America.

At the farewell dinner given to him in New York in 1868 by over 200 Press representatives, he spoke of the wonderful changes he had found in every thing around him, and added: "I have resolved . . . on my return to England, in my own person . . . to bear for the behoof of my countrymen, such testimony to the gigantic changes in this country as I have hinted at to-night. . . . This testimony, so long as I live, and so long as my descendants have any legal right to my books, I shall cause to be republished as an appendix to every copy of those two books of mine in which I have referred to America."

He concluded his address with "Points of difference there probably will be between the two great people; but broadcast in England is sown the sentiment that these two people





Tiny Tim and
Bob Cratchit

are essentially one, and that it rests with the majority to uphold the great Anglo-Saxon race. It would be better for this globe to be ridden by an earthquake, fired by a comet, overrun by an iceberg, and abandoned to the Arctic fox and bear than that it should present the spectacle of those two great nations, each of whom has in its own way and hour, striven so hard and successfully for freedom, ever again being arrayed against one another."

Tumultuous applause greeted this peroration, the whole of the company rising to its feet.

The financial result of this American tour was a no less remarkable achievement, £19,000 remaining after the payment of all expenses. But success was not attained without the great sacrifice of his health; and although only fifty-six at the time, he looked a much older man. Yet, the great attraction these readings offered him—to say nothing of the pecuniary benefit—made him resolve on a farewell tour of one hundred

readings in London and the Provinces for which he was to receive the sum of £8000 clear of all expenses. They commenced in October, 1868, and occupied a certain number of days in each month, and covered Ireland and Scotland as well as England. Even more wonderful receptions awaited him on these farewell readings than had been witnessed previously, and in some of the larger cities dinners were arranged in his honour by the literary lights of the country.

The tour was not a continuous one from town to town, but occupied a certain number of days each month, thus permitting him to pay periodical visits to London. This necessitated much travelling, which had a serious effect on his health. In addition to this Dickens had for some time been suffering severely from a malady which was in fact a partial paralysis of the left side, with the result that in April, 1869, at Preston, the reading had to be cancelled, and the tour closed, by the orders of his medical attendant.

Dickens retired to the restful repose of Gads Hill, and gave himself up to entertaining there several of his American friends. This proved so beneficial that in the early part of 1870 he was permitted by his Doctor to give a dozen more readings in London.

The final reading was on the 15th March at the St. James's Hall, Piccadilly, where over two thousand people (representing a money value of £422) were present. The items were *A Christmas Carol*, and the Trial Scene from *Pickwick*, at the conclusion of which, with profound emotion Dickens said a few simple words of farewell, concluding with "Ladies and Gentlemen, in two short weeks from this time I hope that you may enter, in your own homes, on a new series of readings at which my assistance will be indispensable; but from these garish



David and
Ham

lights, I vanish for evermore with a heartfelt, grateful, respectful, and affectionate farewell."

Within a very few weeks of that date he had indeed taken the longest farewell of all.

His new book, referred to at the farewell meeting, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, was to have been in twelve monthly parts; six only were published; and then the mystery was left unsolved, for the pen of the only one who knew the secret was laid aside for ever.

On the last page was this beautiful passage: "A brilliant morning shines in the old city. Its antiquities and ruins are surprisingly beautiful with a lusty ivy gleaming in the sun, and the rich trees waving



The Empty Chair

By Sir Luke Fildes, R.A.

in the balmy air. Changes of glorious light from moving boughs, songs of birds, scents from gardens, woods and fields—or rather from the one great garden of the whole cultivated island in its yielding time—penetrate into the Cathedral, subdue its earthly odour, and preach the Resurrection and the Life. The cold stone tombs of centuries ago grow warm, and the flecks of brightness dart into the sternest marble corners of the building fluttering there like wings."

"A brilliant morning shines in the old city." It was June, and the city Rochester. He wrote these words in the Swiss Chalet, at Gads Hill. Here he worked at the story of *Edwin Drood* on the 8th June, 1870. At dinner that evening he was seized with a sudden stroke.

Twenty-four hours later the news of his death stirred the heart, not only of England, but of all countries beyond the seas. In England it was as though a personal loss had befallen everyone. Queen Victoria telegraphed from Balmoral her deepest regret, and all classes shared this sentiment.

There was not one English journal that did not refer to the loss in a touching manner; and *The Times* took the lead in suggesting Westminster Abbey as the only fit resting place for a man so dear to the heart of the nation.

Dickens himself would have preferred to lie in the little churchyard of Shorne, near Gads Hill, or in the graveyard under Rochester Castle, where indeed a grave was already being made, when the request of the Dean of Westminster was received that the body should lie in the Abbey.



The Grave, Westminster Abbey

By Sir Luke Fildes, R.A.

By Dickens's own desire the funeral was private; only those taking part in it were supplied with details; by mid-day of the Tuesday following the death, all was done. Then later in the day and all the day following a great concourse came to the Abbey to pay their last respects to the departed author. So great was the crowd that the grave was kept open till Thursday, but even then the mourners did not cease to come, and many were the flowers strewn on the spot by unknown hands; many were the tears shed by unknown eyes.

On the following Sunday, Dean Stanley delivered an impressive discourse in the Abbey,

and pointing to the flowers that had been freshly thrown upon the grave—as they are even now annually deposited there—said: “The spot would thenceforward be a sacred one, with both the New World and the Old, as that of the representative of the literature, not of this island only, but of all who speak our English tongue.”

So there in the hallowed Poet's Corner, Charles Dickens lies; and near by are the monuments erected to Chaucer, Shakespeare and Dryden, the three immortals who (in the words of John Forster) “did most to create and settle the language to which Charles Dickens has given another undying name.”

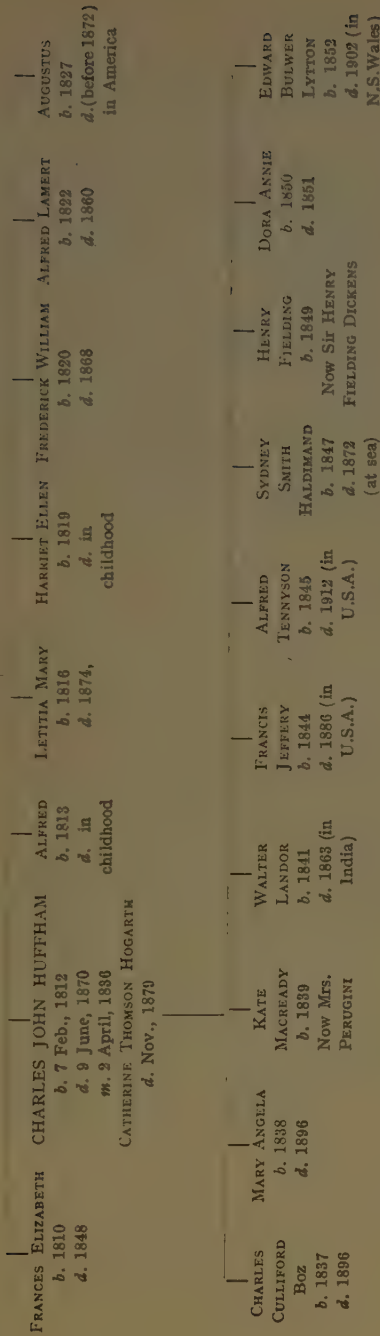
JOHN DICKENS

b. about 1786

d. 31 March, 1851

m. ELIZABETH BARROW

d. Sept., 1863



THE DICKENS FAMILY

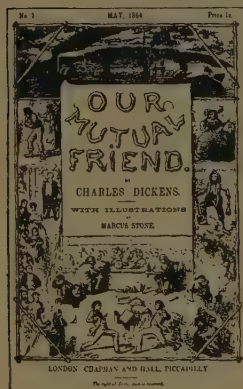
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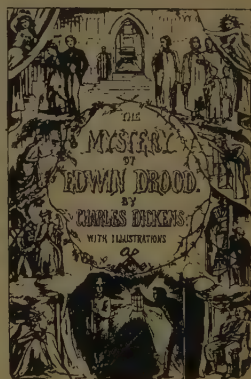


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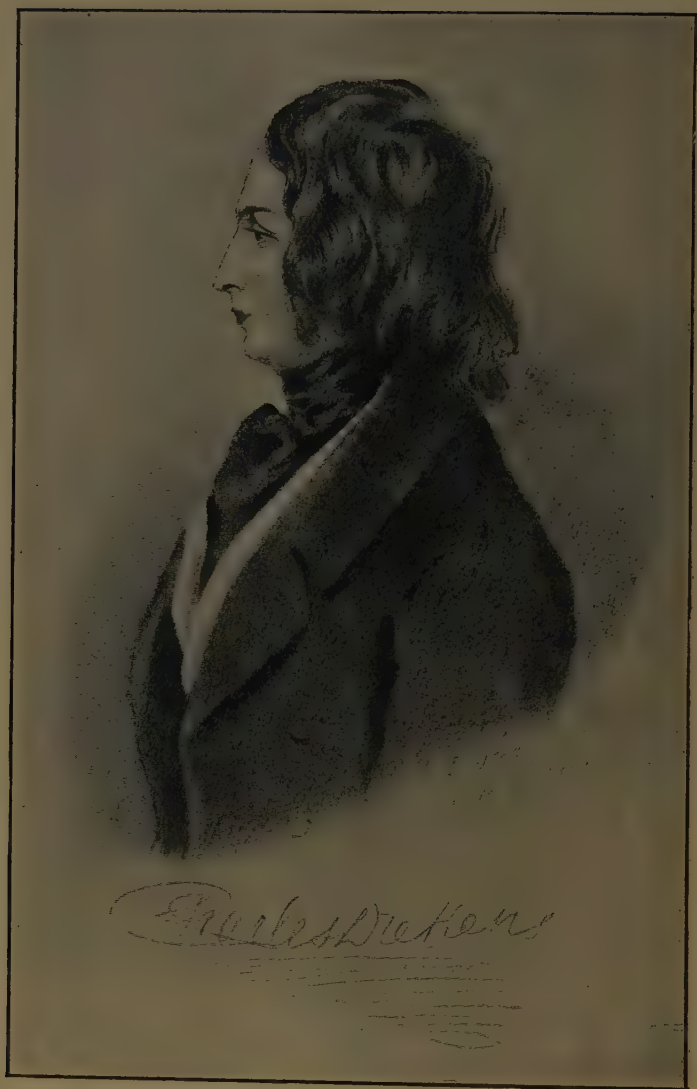
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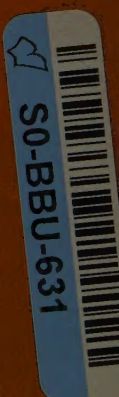
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